DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 969 PS 018 157

AUTHOR Curtis, Dorothy Smith
TITLE Early Childhood Programs in Denmark, England, Spain, Italy, and Australia.
PUB DATE May 89
NOTE 161p.; Master's Thesis, California State University, Northridge.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Programs; Cross Cultural Studies; *Day Care; Early Childhood Education; Educational Quality; Family Day Care; *Financial Support; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); *Government Role; Preschool Education; *Program Administration; Program Descriptions; *State Programs; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS Aboriginal People; Australia; Denmark; England; Italy; *Playgroups; Spain

ABSTRACT

Providing a cross-cultural perspective on governmental involvement in the provision of day care services, this study explores early childhood programs in five countries. Chapter 1 is a brief introduction, Chapter 2 describes state supported child care in Denmark. Chapter 3 describes playgroups in England. Chapter 4 concerns state and municipal child care programs in Italy. Chapter 5 offers a personal account of a private day care center near Barcelona, Spain. Comparatively more comprehensive, Chapter 6 describes the range of available early childhood services in Australia. In addition to descriptive material, each chapter includes accounts of the history of the particular country's early childhood programs, teacher preparation, and program funding and administration. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, explores the persistent problems of the affordability, quality, and availability of early childhood programs; suggests possible options for Americans which can be derived from existing international programs, and poses questions for further planners. Approximately 60 references are cited. (Author/RH)

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS IN DENMARK, ENGLAND, SPAIN, ITALY, AND AUSTRALIA

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Educational Psychology

by

Dorothy Smith Curtis

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the help of parents and educators who gave so freely of their time. An interest in children and a desire to learn what others are doing to care for them opens doors in every country.

My special thanks go to the many people.

In Denmark, Renée Adrian, music teacher for the Brønby Kommune; Nils Grønbeck, parent in Gentofte; Nils Jacobsen, director of Nygård Børnehave in Brønbyøster; Janne Jorgensen, psychologist for Brønby Kommune; Ulla Nielsson, teacher at Skovej 2 in Gentofte; Kirsten Rudolph, director of Nordly Vuggestue in Brønbyøster; and Karen Villien, director of further education for børnehave teachers in Denmark all welcomed my inquiries.

In Leeds, England, the PreSchool Playgroup Association referred me to neighborhood playgroups whose leaders always welcomed me to their groups. Mary Rowbotham, director of the "Under Fives" Program in Leeds and Mrs. Bennett, director of University Children's Centre, Leeds University both helped me to understand the professional educator's relationship to the Playgroup Movement.

The Rome study would not have been possible without the help of good friends, Sandro and Irene Figa-Talamanca; Dr. Guiseppe Velardo and Laura Celía of the Ministry of Public Instruction; Antonio Galati, director of Scuola Materna "Giovanni Cagliero"; D.D. Matteo Pischedda, director of Scuola Materna "Don P. Albera"; and Signora Panepucci-Nella, lead teacher of Scuola Materna "Saffi".

My Spanish connections were Joaquim Bruna, Joan Verdera and José Galé, three friends and fathers of young children. Adelaide Balbuena, director of El Guardería Partufet and her patient teachers, particularly Mariabelle and Louisa, allowed me to conduct my study at their center.

Among the many teachers, parents and administrators who tried to help me understand Australia were Gil Anderson of the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union of Australia; Dalma Dixon, National Director, and Elizabeth Dau, Assistant Director of the Australian Early Childhood Association in 1986 and Pam Cahir, National Director in 1989; Laurine MacPherson, director of the Perth Lady Gowrie Centre; Margaret Hutson, director of Christopher Robin Day Care Centre, Pat Stewart, coordinator of Murawina; Keith Speldewinde, Department of Community Service and Health in Canberra; and Cathy Willis, Brenda Benson and Cath Sullivan, all playgroup mothers.

I also want to thank the members of my committee. The enthusiasm of Jan Fish for my project and her own knowledge and interest in cross-cultural programs provided a sounding board for my ideas. Betty Brady's high standards and sharp intellect kept me from wandering too far off task. Betsy Ringsmuth, as chair, has provided much needed support, encouragement and wisdom for the past one and one-half years.

Finally, I thank my family, whose love and support has kept this wife/mother/grandmother/teacher/student on a steady course.

Table of Contents

		Page
Acknowledgements		iii
Abstract		vii
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
	Need for Continued Research	2
	IEA Preprimary Project	5
	Objectives of this Study	6
Chapter 2	State Supported Child Care in Denmark	9
	Background	9
	Teacher Training	12
	The Centers	13
	Parent Education	20
	Conclusions	21
Chapter 3	Playgroups in England	24
	A Short History of Playgroups	24
	Training for Play Leaders and Parents	28
	The Playgroups	30
	Conclusions	39
Chapter 4	State and Municipal Child Care Programs in Italy	43
	History of Preschool Education in Italy	43
	Teacher Preparation	52
	The Child Care Centers	54
	Conclusions	73
Chapter 5	A Private Day Care Center in Catalunya	77
	A History of Preschool Education in Catalunya	77
	Teacher Training	83
	El Guardería: Llar d'Infants Partufet	85
	Conclusions	95
Chapter 6	Early Childhood Services in Australia	98
	Background	99
	Preschool and Child Care Staff	101
	Preschools	103
	Child Care Centers	106
	Family Day Care Schemes	115
	Neighborhood and Community Centers	116

Private Day Care 119
Playgroups 122
Aboriginal Children's Services 128
Conclusions 131

Chapter 7 Conclusions 134
Affordability 135
Availability 138
Quality 139
The Future 142

References 144

Appendices 149

ABSTRACT

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS IN
DENMARK, ENGLAND, ITALY, SPAIN, AND AUSTRALIA

by

Dorothy Smith Curtis

Master of Arts in Educational Psychology

The problem of finding affordable and available quality day care for preschool children has become a national political issue in the United States. The question of how involved a governmment should become in funding, operating and monitoring day care facilities is being faced and acted upon in countries all over the world. Unfortunately, cross-cultural exchange of information is very limited.

This study explores early childhood programs in five countries. It includes a wide range of programs in Australia but focuses on one different aspect of early childhood education in each of the other countries: state-supported child care in Denmark, playgroups in England, state and municipal experimental programs in Italy, and a personal account of a private day care center near Barcelona, Spain. In addition, each chapter includes an historical account of the country's early childhood programs, teacher preparation, and funding and administration of the program.

The concluding chapter explores the persistent problems of the affordability, quality, and availability of early childhood programs, possible options for Americans which can be derived from existing international programs, and poses questions for future planners.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study of early childhood programs in five countries is the result of a long-term interest in early childhood education both in and outside of the United States. Over a period of 25 years, my husband and I have lived for almost four years in Denmark. For two of those years, my attention was focused on elementary and secondary education while our five children struggled and eventually thrived in the Danish public school system. In 1971, I began to teach parenting classes, which parents and young children attended together, for the Los Angeles Unified School District. On a return visit to Denmark in 1976, I audited a class on Piaget and another on children's body movement and music at Danmark's Lœre Hojskole (Denmark's School of Advanced Teacher Education) in Copenhagen. During that same year, I began to visit day care centers in the greater Copenhagen area and, also, in Leeds, England. I continued this informal research again in 1980 in Copenhagen and Leeds.

The initial investigation for this study began in the spring of 1986, when my husband and I spent three months at Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. It continued in the fall of 1986 with a one-month stay each in a village near Barcelona, in the city of Leeds, and in a suburb of Copenhagen, a month in Rome in 1988, and another month in Canberra in January of 1989. During each of these trips, I visited early childhood programs, spoke with educators, read the literature, and discussed problems with friends

in an attempt to understand the bases on which political and educational issues were decided. Contrary to popular opinion, not everyone in Spain, Denmark, and Italy speaks English; preschool children never do. A working knowledge of Danish, passable Spanish, and a smattering of Italian made it possible for me to visit schools without interpreters, talk with teachers, and interact with the children. It was also possible to read, with varying degrees of difficulty, current research and government information in each language.

Need for Continued Research

Unfortunately, the cross-cultural exchange of information is very limited. It is difficult for a foreign visitor or reader to get a clear picture of another nation's programs, in part because few countries have conducted systematic investigations of a program's effectiveness (Thompson, 1987). Language poses an obvious obstacle when a foreign investigator must depend upon translators, guided tours, and readings in English for information.

Nonetheless, establishing programs to care for young children outside the home has become a world-wide issue of the 1980s. Powerful social, economic, and political pressures are forcing governments to commit themselves to expanding educational programs for infants and preschool children. These pressures include the desire to use early childhood education as a means of reducing inequality in educational opportunity and giving socially disadvantaged children a better start in life, the need to provide working mothers with adequate child care, and the difficulties today

of providing adequately for the social and intellectual needs of young children in the home (Thompson, 1987).

Prior to World War II, most day nurseries in the Western countries provided minimal custodial care for the children of poor working mothers while a few privately-run nursery schools catered to the needs of wealthy and middle-class families. In the United States, the first federally supported child care programs were begun in 1933 under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Project Administration (WPA), primarily as an effort to create jobs but also to "alleviate the physical and mental handicaps imposed on young children because of economic and social difficulties of that period" (Rauth, 1977, p. 32).

Most of these programs ceased to exist as WPA programs were phased out in the late 1930s. However, in 1942 during World War II, when women were needed in the work force, Congress passed a community facilities bill, the Lanham Act, which allowed the Federal government to pay for half of public-works programs, including day care, in war-impacted areas. During the war years, the Federal government spent almost $52 million for 3,102 day care centers serving 600,000 children (Rauth, 1977). According to Miller (1977), by June, 1943:

> Thirty-nine states had fully operating, extended school services administered by state and local authorities and 30 states had similar services administered by welfare agencies. At the peak of July, 1945, approximately 1.6 million children were enrolled in nursery schools and child care centers receiving Federal funds (p. 48).

During both the Depression and the war years, educators and social welfare agencies formed a liaison to provide extensive family support. However, within months after the war was over, Federal funds for the support of day care centers were cut off. In 1977, only California and New York were continuing to fund a limited number of centers on a large scale basis, primarily for the disadvantaged poor (Miller, 1977).

During the 1960s throughout western Europe, North America, and Australia, early childhood educators became concerned with the quality of day care available to young children. Custodial care was deemed inadequate in providing an optimal developmental environment. Federal governments were forced to become involved in setting and maintaining standards; some countries, particularly Denmark and Sweden, implemented strong day care programs at that time. In the United States, the Federal government initiated the Head Start program for disadvantaged children during the year prior to kindergarten entrance.

The United States government has been reluctant to commit itself to the cause of young children. In 1977, Rauth wrote,

> The United States is the only industrialized country in the world which does not provide basic child care services for its citizenry. Our chaotic condition of demand far exceeding supply, and the absence or erosion of standards is further evidence of the lack of national commitment to providing services for children (p. 34).

By 1987 the situation had not changed very much. According to Thompson,

> In the United States, this explosion of interest and activity (in preschool programs) has taken place despite the fact that the nation is largely unprepared to meet the challenges it presents. We lack a consistent rationale for programmatic and curriculum development as well as trained personnel to staff programs, appropriate facilities for early education programs and an effective overall research to guide our efforts (p.1).

Now, in 1989, the Federal government is finally being forced to come up with some kind of commitment to the education and care of its young children. Those individuals who are responsible for making public policy decisions concerning child care need information about existing programs and their funding, both in the United States and abroad.

IEA Preprimary Project:

One project involving international research is now under way in 14 countries throughout the world. In 1986, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) instituted a special Preprimary Project (IEA/PPA) as "a cross-national study of early childhood care and education in both developed and developing countries" (Bairrão, 1988, p.1). The purpose of the project is

> to obtain information about the early childhood care and education settings actually used by families with preschool children, reasons for using child care and education settings in general, reasons for selecting particular types of settings, problems with settings, and perceived need for additional settings (High/Scope, 1988).

The data is collected through interviews conducted directly with families about their use of various types of day care and educational programs. The same core interview is used by all countries but each individual country may modify the questions to suit local conditions and/or extend the questions in order to gather data of regional interest. Preliminary reports from the participating countries indicate the enormous complexity of doing a comparative analysis using data from cultures as diverse as West Germany, Thailand, Nigeria, the USSR, the United States and China, but the investigators are encouraged by the initial results. According to the team of Portugese investigators,

> One can easily anticipate the scientific value of such comparative data and the questions that will arise. What is the quality of life -- and what variables are determinant -- of children from so different backgrounds? How do the different socialization settings for each child articulate themselves throughout the different countries? Is there a pattern for each country or are the routines similar?
>
> The possibility of answering such questions, both at the international or national level is, we believe, one of the greatest challenges of the study (Abreu-Lima, Barbosa, and Cruz, 1988, p.9).

Objectives of this Study

The two basic choices of what country to visit and how long to stay were determined by my husband's work. Our four months in Canberra allowed time for a study of the range of early childhood programs available in the Canberra area and, to a lesser extent,

throughout Australia. However, in each of the other countries that we visited, I elected to focus on just one aspect of early childhood education, each program different from the other, but within the framework of the Australian work.

The primary objectives of this research are:

- to explore a variety of programs which may have implications in the United States.
- to describe the funding of the programs in order to judge their affordability if implemented in the United States.
- to investigate the type of teacher training and the quality of the educational programs.
- to determine the degree of availability of the programs to the country's young children.

Thus, Chapter 2, State Supported Child Care in Denmark explores how day care institutions are integrated into the social and economic structure of Brønby, a suburb of Copenhagen. Chapter 3, Playgroups in England, studies the Playgroup Movement from 1945 to the present day with examples of current programs in Leeds. Chapter 4, State and Municipal Child Care Programs in Italy focuses on State supported and locally supported day care institutions. New experiments in educational programs in Rome and Reggio nell'Emilia are described. Chapter 5, A Private Day Care Center in Catalunya is a personal account of a private day care center in Sant Cugat del Valles in the Catalunyan region of Spain. Chapter 6, Early Childhood Services in Australia is a broader study which identifies available services, including those covered in the previous four chapters, and

provides anecdotal examples drawn from personal visits throughout the country as well as results of some current research.

In addition, each chapter includes a history and/or background of early childhood education in that country, teacher preparation, funding and administration, and a bit about the political commitment to the education of young children.

The summary and conclusions appear in Chapter 7. These include a discussion of the persistent problems of the affordability, quality, and accessibility of early childhood programs, possible options for Americans which can be derived from international programs and questions for the future.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE SUPPORTED CHILD CARE IN DENMARK

The Danish system of child care is one of the most comprehensive and well supported programs in the world. It is maintained by a combination of Federal, municipal and family support which allows for local variation within a tightly regulated system. The focus of this study is on the programs offered to the families with young children in the community of Brønby, a working class suburb of Copenhagen. Particular attention will be paid to the funding of these programs and discussions with child care providers.

The background information includes an explanation of the general structure of early childhood services and teacher education for the country as a whole. The body of the chapter describes typical centers and discussions with the staff. The study concludes with remarks about concerns and strengths of the Danish day care system.

Background

In Denmark ninety percent of women with young children work, half of them full time. Preschool children are cared for and brought up in three different ways: the home, home day care providers, and day institutions. Although the high percentage of working mothers has been a phenomenon of the past twenty years, it was never considered "bad" for small children to be in some kind of private day care for at least part of a day. Most of the original centers were sponsored by religious organizations, but after World War II, these became unacceptable to many parents. Non-religious community

centers were deemed more appropriate. In 1976, Aase Hauch wrote that few places in the world tried more wholeheartedly to offer a public net of good day institutions working in cooperation with parents on the raising of their young children. Post war Denmark has provided the social and political climate needed for the development of a nationwide, high quality system of institutional day care for its young children. It stands as an example of what can be done when the level of support from all sectors is high.

Maternity leave in Denmark consists of four weeks before the due date of birth and either twenty four weeks after birth at full pay or six months after birth at sick leave pay (dagsyv løn) which is ninety percent of salary, but no more than 2000 kroner ($270) per week. Maternity leave pay for adoptive parents is based on the welfare stipend (bistands løn) and is somewhat less. Since most infant day care centers (called "vuggestuer" or "rocking rooms") have a waiting list, babies are usually six months old before a mother goes back to work. Fathers may apply for a two week "childbirth leave" after the birth of a child and the last ten weeks of maternity leave may be assumed by either parent. In actual fact, only fifty percent of the fathers take the two weeks, and three percent actually stay home for the extended time (Braun, 1986).

When the mother returns to work, private arrangements for baby sitting can be made, or the baby may be placed either with a home day care provider ("dagpleje" or day nurse) or in a vuggestue. In either case the parent applies through the local Social Services and Health Administration. When the child is placed, the parent pays monthly to Social Services which in turn pays the selected day care

provider. All licensed home day care providers are eligible for the benefits of any Danish worker: sick pay, holiday leave, and medical and retirement benefits. Although she does not usually have training in early childhood, she may take advantage of the sevices of a visiting nurse, a toy loan center, and courses in child development.

A child who attends a vuggestue will transfer to a regular day care center (børnehave) at the age of three, although children coming from home or day care providers may be admitted at two-and-a-half. The child may stay there until entering school in August of the year that he or she turns seven. However, most children attend a kindergarten class (børnehaveklasse), a three hour kindergarten program at the public schools, prior to regular school admission. In many cases all of the facilities are close together so that a child may simply leave the day care center for the three hour program at school and then return in time for lunch. In other situations the child may transfer completely to a school setting and an after school program ("fritidshjem"). Whatever the arrangement in a community-administered program, the staff does not deal with admissions and payments.

By law, child care costs are shared in the following manner:

Federal Government: (Staten)	30%	
Local Government: (Kommune)	35%	
Family: (Familie)	35%	(Budget, 1986)

In actual fact most local governments increase the subsidy up to 50% in order to reduce parent fees. In Brønby 10% of the total yearly budget is spent on subsidies for infant, pre-school, and after-school care. The actual cost per child in a vuggestue in 1986 was

over Kr5000 ($675 in 1986 dollars) per month. Of this, the State paid 30%, the parents paid 24% and the local government paid the remaining 46% of total cost. The cost of a child in a børnehave was Kr2600 ($340) per month, of which the parents paid 27%, the State paid 30% and the local government the remaining 43%. (Brønby Folkeregistrat, 1986) In addition, fee reductions are available on a sliding scale to low income families. The local administration anticipated empty places in both the vuggestuer and the børnehaver, a direct effect of the falling birthrate in Denmark (Budget, 1986).

Teacher Training

Twenty five years ago there were 5,000 teachers working in day care centers and after school programs in Denmark; today there are 30,000. The training, which is remarkably uniform throughout the country, consists of three years at a college of education. The courses include psychology, sociology, theoretical and practical pedagogy and work experience in institutions. Teaching assistants do not need any special education but receive "on-the-job" training (K. Villien, personal communication, December 10, 1986).

The basic salary scale for teachers is the same throughout the country. However, a cost of living allowance is added to salaries in the Copenhagen area. In Brønby in 1986 a teacher received between Kr11,700 and Kr12,778 per month (about $1580 and $1725). Assistants earned between Kr10,382 and Kr.10,744 ($1402 and $1450) for a forty hour week. (Brønby Folkeregistrat, 1986) It is difficult to compare salaries between the United States and Denmark because of the difference in the tax structure. According to the 1986 Brønby tax table, a person earning Kr12,000 per month payed a

combined State, County and Local tax of about Kr65,460 a year, or 45% of total income. (Budget, 1986). The high tax rate, plus a sales tax of 22% on most goods subsidizes child care (among other services) and provides a generally high quality of life for its citizens

The Centers

In 1986 the community of Brønby, with a population of about 35,000 people, served 1900 children between the ages of 0 and 6 in 45 public institutions. These include infant day care and regular day care centers and "integrated institutions" which provide both pre-school and after-school care, and home day care providers (Budget, 1986).

Child care centers are sometimes located in old houses or apartment complexes but the majority have been built within the last twenty years as centers. The rooms are all well equipped, well lighted, and attractive. The children sleep in three-tiered bunk-bed cots which fold into a closet when not in use.

Three centers will be described in detail: a vuggestue and a børnehave in Brønbyøster and a private børnehave in the affluent suburb of Gentofte.

Nordly Vuggestue.

This infant care center serves a community of renters living in post-war apartment houses fifteen minutes by city train west of the center of Copenhagen. The director has worked in Brønbyøster for twenty five years and has been on the staff since the center opened eighteen years ago. Some of the teachers have worked with her for fifteen years.

The center is open weekdays from 6:30 A. M. to 5 P.M. It is licensed to care for 40 children who are divided into four groups: eight infants up to one year of age in one group, ten children in each of two groups of one year olds and twelve "early twos" in the fourth group. At least two adults are with each group at all times.

The children who arrive before 8 A.M. are provided breakfast. During the morning the children play inside and out, depending upon the weather, The infants' food requirements are dealt with individually but the older toddlers are given a warm lunch at 11 A.M. and rye bread, milk or fruit after nap time. In Denmark, all children in public institutions receive a vitamin supplement between October 1 and April 1 ; babies under one year receive it the whole year.

On this first morning all forty children and twelve adults were assembled for an hour with an outside music teacher who specializes in songs and rhythms for young children. The specialist, Renèe Adrian, travels all over Denmark with her accordian and a suitcase full of small toys and puppets. Although most of the children were too young to really do the finger movements, they joined in the songs with their eyes and body movement. Each adult attended approximately three children, holding the babies and sitting next to the little ones. After the show the children returned to their rooms and some were bundled up for outside play until lunch time. After lunch the children were prepared for naps; in the winter this meant hats, mittens, sweaters and a quilted sleeping sack which kept them snug and warm. Then there were placed in stationary outside buggies where they were soon fast asleep.

Nordly is a public vuggestue, so policy is governed by the Department of Social Services. The parent advisory group meets three times per year to discuss the needs of the school and plan general meetings, but they cannot decide fundamental issues concerning hiring, admissions, or budget.

The director said that most parents worked full time so that children were often at the center for nine or ten hours a day, which she thought was too long. In the preceding year about one third of the mothers lived alone with their children but most had partners at the present time.. Many couples were not married but, if they were both parents of the child, the State considered both incomes when figuring day care fees. If the current man was not the father, then the father had to pay child support. Most families at the center paid the full parent cost of Kr995 per month. Irresponsible and abusive parents were problems for directors of some day care centers but this director and other community support personnel all said, "but not at Nordly". It had the reputation of being a well run, stable center (K. Rudolph, personal communication, November 27, 1986).

Nygård Børnehave.

This day care center adjoins the Nygård Elementary School, an infant day care center (vuggestue) and an after-school center (fritidshjem) in an apartment house neighborhood. The center celebrated its twenty fifth anniversary in 1986. The layout of the building is similar to Nordly's and many others of the same vintage in the area.

Two visits were made to Nygård during the Christmas season. Both the director and one assistant teacher were male, and they

talked extensively about their positions. The government's policy is eventually to have at least one male teacher in every børnehave , a situation which everyone seemed to agree would be beneficial to the many children who do not have fathers at home. This center is licensed to serve sixty children but, since it accepts some children with handicaps, the number has been reduced to fifty two children between the ages of two-and-a-half and seven. The director outlined the following table:

Table 1
Teacher/Child Ratio by Age and Class

	Rm.1	Rm.2	Rm.3
No. of children	20	12	20
Ages	3 - 7	2 - 3	3 - 7
No. of adults	1 teacher 1 aide	1 teacher 2 aides	2 teachers
Adult hrs./wk	80 (40-40)	106 (36-30-40)	80 (40-40)

On both visiting days some staff and many children were absent because of illness or, in the case of some children, because their parents were unemployed and attendance was erratic. One morning there were thirty eight children and seven adults. Both the director and the assistant felt that the neighborhood had many problems. The mother of a child in Room 1 had recently died of a drug overdose. Of the remaining nineteen children, nine lived with both parents. In these families, five had two working parents, three had one working parent and one had two unemployed parents. One or

two of the remaining children lived with their fathers, three others lived with their mothers and another man and the remaining five or six were with single mothers. It was interesting that the director did not think that marital and family problems were necessarily reflected in the child's behavior. In Denmark grandparents and day care centers sometimes provide stability for children (N. Jacobsen, personal communication, December 8, 1986)

The children in Room 1 were very interested in having a visitor and liked to be asked their names and ages. They were all excited about the Christmas activities in progress. One morning some of the children were decorating jars which were to be filled with cookies that had already been baked. These would be Christmas presents for their parents. Other children played with large sized Lego or wrestled in the "tumbling room". At 11:00 the three six-year olds arrived from the kindergarten class and all sat down to a lunch brought from home. The teachers turned out all of the lights and put one lighted, red candle on each table. (On a gray Danish day in December, it is dark even at noon time.) The Christmas decorations covered the walls and hung from the ceiling and the children became quiet and relaxed. The Danes have a word for that feeling. It is "hyggelig" and translates as comfortable, snug and cozy. The children and teachers all wanted the visitor to enjoy that special moment with them on a cold, mid-winter morning.

Børnehaven Skovej 2

In Denmark private day care centers which follow State guidelines concerning health and safety regulations, staff-child ratio and physical facilities receive the same financial support as public

centers. "Skovej 2" is a self governing institution organized in 1971. At that time parents formed an organization called "Bjørn og Miljø" (Children and Environment) to deal with the formal administration of the center. The basic philosophy of the group was to "further the children's capacity for tolerance, community and social understanding."(Kære Nye Børn, 1986, p.1) The center is housed in an old, comfortable, somewhat impractical "villa" with good outdoor facilities in the beautiful suburb of Gentofte, northeast of Copenhagen. It is licensed to care for forty four children from two to six years old and is open from 7A.M. to 5 P.M. weekdays. In 1988, parent fees were Kr1500 per month for toddlers and Kr1050 for preschoolers. The conservative Gentofte municipal government pays a smaller percentage of the total cost of child care than the working class community of Brønby.

The teachers at the center were anxious to explain the differences between public and private day care centers. Two major issues were funding and enrollment procedures. Normally a public day care center operates with a highly designated budget; for example, money budgeted for equipment cannot be spent on staff. At a private center, the steering committee can appeal to the local government for discretionary use of some money. During the preceding year the extraordinary amount of sickness among the staff meant that money budgeted for substitutes was used up too quickly. The committee was able to use trip funds for substitutes' salaries. According to one teacher, a community børnehave would not have that option. Instead, it would have to do without adequate staff or

perhaps ask the healthy teachers to work longer hours (U. Nielsson, personal communication, December 10, 1986).

Normally a parent enrolls a child in a public day care facility by applying to the local government. The child is then assigned a spot by the Department of Social Services and no visitation or discussion with the day care director is required. To enroll a child in Skovej 2, a parent first applies to the local government but then has to visit the center and agree to their special rules and basic philosophy. Most of the families who join become involved in the center and develop friendships which continue outside the school setting.

Skovej 2 has many interesting features. The four full time teachers share the responsibilities of director. The teacher who takes the new two year old group in August moves along with the children as they grow from age two to five. Thus she spends four years with the same group of children. Each group has two class rooms which they use as a home base but the children play freely throughout the house. However, the hours between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. are reserved for "group time" when the teacher and her children act as a unit. They might play inside or outside, make bread, visit a museum or decide on the spur of the moment to take a walk in the woods. The older children help prepare the lunch, set the table, clean up, and care for various fish and plants. Each spring all of the older children (ages 3 - 6) plus staff spend five days together at a camp in the country. This is taken very seriously and all eligible children are expected to attend.

The visit took place on a cold, windy day, but at 10:30 the children in Ulla's room of three-year olds decided to go outside to

play. All eleven children had to put on thick socks, snow suits, boots, hats, scarves and mittens. They were very independent and managed to find their own things amidst a lot of confusion and get into their clothes almost without help. Outside, they played in the wet sand, rode tricycles and engaged in cooperative play. There was no aggressive behavior and no tears; it was high quality play among good natured children.

Private day care centers demand commitment by the parents. In the community of Brønby, there are forty five public centers and just one private børnehave. The children in Gentofte are a privileged minority.

Parent Education

A family in distress gets individual help from a local government psychologist, but parent education as a subject does not exist in Denmark. Occasionally a particular psychologist will organize a discussion group for a few weeks. In the fall of 1986 the psychologist in Brønby, Janne Jorgensen, conducted a six month, once-a-week discussion group with six young, unmarried, unemployed mothers. Some areas of discussion were: problems of the single mother, the"Monday child" returning from a weekend with the father, child rearing, and educational possibilities for themselves. According to Jorgensen, the course was successful but nothing else had been planned (personal communication, December 15, 1986).

A two year pilot program had been established in a central Copenhagen day care center which was trying to become a community center. Young, poor, single mothers were encouraged to come to the center for lessons in cooking, sewing, cleaning, and

shopping. This program, which was an effort to help these young parents in general coping ability, was in the process of being evaluated.

Renèe Adrian, the music specialist, holds "Mommy and Me" type classes in libraries and schools throughout Denmark on an occasional basis. She works very hard to promote happy adult-child experiences and seeks out parents and home day care providers. She said, "There are no happy children in Denmark anymore. It is the same all over. Mothers are working and the children are in day care" (personal communication, December 11, 1986).

All day care centers hold at least four parent meetings a year. At a fall meeting at the Nordly Vuggestue, the psychologist showed a film on Child Development and continued with questions from the parents. Later two parents made a point of asking her advice on current problems, and she was able to help. Bringing information to parents in this way is fairly common. It is not a high priority, however. (J. Jorgensen, personal communication, December 15, 1986)

These are examples of the types of parent education programs available. For parents in stress help is available on an individual basis but for the majority of Danes help and advise in parenting is still a family affair.

Conclusions

It is difficult to fault the Danish day care system. According to Karen Villien, Director of Further Education for Nursery School Teachers in Denmark, the biggest problem is that parents work too many hours to have the time or energy to spend with their children.

She felt that no child should spend ten hours a day in a day care center. The law that states that a working day is eight hours should also hold for children. The logical extension of that argument is that parents should work on "flexed schedules" and single mothers should work less than full time and receive the necessary supplemental income from the government.

Loneliness is another problem, particularly for the single, working mother. She may work eight hours every day and come home to a small apartment with one or two children and too little money. The whole concept of poverty is being redefined in Denmark today (K. Villien, personal communication, December 15, 1986).

The class teacher at Børnehaven Skovej 2 thought that the biggest problem of their parents was the inability to say, "No! That's enough!" She said that the children got away with too much while the parents tried to reason and intellectualize everything (U. Nielsson, personal communication, 1986).

All of these issues are being discussed in the Danish press. When the Conservatives took over the government, they proposed cutting back on child care services and sending working mothers back home. But the women would not go. Many needed to work for economic as well as personal reasons. Now the government wants to consolidate services, making centers which will accommodate all community needs including day care, occasional care, after-school care, senior citizens center and a neighborhood meeting place. In the opinion of Karen Villien, the neighborhood concept is acceptable to early childhood professionals, but she felt that the child care centers must continue as separate and secure places for children, perhaps

becoming one unit within a larger neighborhood setting (personal communication, December 15, 1986).

The attitude of most Scandanavians, conservatives as well as liberals, can be summed up by a public policy statement of the Social Venstre party in Norway in "Child Care--A Public Responsibility":

> Formerly children were an investment and security for one's old age. Today, a secure old age is not dependent upon one's own children but all active workers today depend on the children to be active workers tomorrow and support the older people who are on pensions. Therefore, all adults, with or without children, have a public responsibility for the support of children." (BarneHager, 1980, p.20)

Even in the present period of fiscal restraint and a more conservative government in Denmark, the commitment to quality day care has been maintained.

CHAPTER THREE

PLAYGROUPS IN ENGLAND

England has a variety of institutions which provide for the "under-fives", ranging from day care providers to State supported nursery schools, but no other organization can match the number of children served as the PreSchool Playgroup Association (PPA). In 1977 the combined total of children enrolled in all other institutions was essentially the same as the numbers of children attending playgroups. (604,603 and 590,650) (Appendix A). In 1984 thirty four percent of three and four year olds attended playgroups. (PPA Training Guide, 1986.) Nothing comparable exists in the United States, but there is much to be learned from this vital organization. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is on the Playgroup Movement in England with concrete examples drawn from playgroups in Leeds, Yorkshire.

A Short History of Playgroups

Playgroups began as a true "grass roots" organization. In 1945 the post war government promised free nursery education for all children during the year prior to school entrance. Consequently, preschool classes were gradually introduced throughout England and Wales until August, 1960 when the Ministry of Education restricted the expansion of nursery education. In August, 1961 a young London mother, Belle Tutaev, wrote to the Guardian suggesting that mothers band together in a Nursery School Campaign to petition the Ministry for more nursery schools and also to encourage mothers to

start their own schools with hired staff until the government could meet the demand.

The response was immediate and enthusiastic, both from mothers who were already holding informal backyard playgroups and others who were anxious to begin. The Ministries of Health and Education recognized the movement, and other organizations such as The Nursery School Association gave their advice and support. After a few years the movement, which was initially intended to be a temporary solution to a mounting problem, had evolved into a powerful program for preschool children. The original informal structure of a few women helping others form play groups who then helped others has become a professional organization providing a service to individual, autonomous member groups within a network of 450 branches, 40 county associations and a regional and national structure (PPA and Its Past, 1979). The Association publishes its own materials, covering information about PPA, how to run a PPA Playgroup, play activities and items of special interest (PPA Publications List, 1986). It also publishes a monthly magazine, Contact, and a quarterly, Under Five, which is available on the news stands. In twenty-five years the PPA has grown from one woman's idea to a national organization with over 13,000 group members throughout England and Wales, and affiliations in Scotland (SPPA) and Northern Ireland (NIPPA). "In 1976 PPA publicly declared itself a movement in its own right and urged that nursery schools and units should not be built in those areas where parents had shown themselves willing to take responsibility for pre-school provision" (PPA Brochure, 1986, p.2).

Playgroup Philosophy.

The Playgroup Association has chosen its name well, for their basic philosophy rests on the belief that children learn through play.

> PPA believes that all young children have a right to safe, stimulating play in the company of other children under the guidance of friendly adults, and that it is through such play that children can most fully develop, both intellectually and personally. Responsible parents both want and have a right to be involved in the provision of such opportunities for children's growth and happiness. The emblem of PPA, showing children, parents and playgroup leader united equally in a safe strong structure, the circle, symbolises the shared responsibility and enjoyment of a playgroup (PPA brochure, 1986, p.1).

This theme is repeated throughout PPA literature and in discussions with play leaders. However, it is stressed that the degree of involvement of the parent should not determine a child's acceptance in a group. Some play leaders are not comfortable working with parents, and some parents are uninterested in or incapable of helping small children. In the ideal situation, a playgroup offers support and stimulation for both mother and child with positive benefits extending to the entire family. However, PPA recognizes that the ideal is not often the real situation, and the organization accepts playgroups and parents of all kinds. It is a "living movement" with a simple basic philosophy adaptable to the changing times.

Operations

Playgroups are under the authority of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) which also regulates day care centers and child minders. (All types of nursery classes are administered by the Ministry of Education. See Appendix A) Minimum standards for leaders and premises must be met and an adult/child ratio of 1 to 5 must be maintained. Although joining the PPA is not obligatory, 82% of registered playgroups are members. Insurance and group membership to PPA, costing approximately £30 per year, make all of the support systems of the PPA available to the group. All playgroups, community supported or private, must be non-profit in order to qualify for membership.

Staffing is irregular but there must be at least one trained supervisor, a term rather loosely defined as an ex-teacher, a nursery nurse, a nursery teacher or someone who has completed or is currently attending the one year playgroup course. The remaining staff can be paid aides and/or "rota mothers" (a volunteer who serves on a rotating basis). The average pay for a head teacher for a three hour program is about £5 ($7.00) and £3 ($4.20) for the aide. Why do play leaders work for such low wages? One young woman considered it as her contribution to her church, others enjoyed working with children and liked the pocket money and still others appreciated getting out of the house with their young children. One aide in an inner city playgroup thought that there would always be "Mums" available as leaders because Mums would continue to be at home with their small children.

Playgroups usually meet in community buildings or church rooms where rents are either low or nonexistent. Grants are available from a variety of government and private sources for start-up, operating, and emergency funds when the parents are unable to raise sufficient money to meet the group's needs. The local PPA offices sell school supplies at bulk buying rates and operate toy loan libraries. These factors, plus the low salaries, lead to low operating costs and, consequently, low fees. The average cost to parents is now just £1 per session in the Leeds area. Although there are a few private, for-profit nursery schools in England, the ready availability of playgroups satisfies the needs of most parents for part-time preschool experiences for their children prior to, or in place of, the Ministry of Education's sessional nursery classes.

Training for Play Leaders and Parents

Although it is against the policy of PPA to press information or education upon mothers, it does support playgroup courses when parents want them. The types of courses can be divided into three categories:

- Doorstep Courses: A series of informal meetings dealing with particular needs for local groups. "However, the basic aim of a doorstep course is to give parents the chance to explore various types of play themselves, to learn how children play and learn through play" (Crowe, 1983, p.100).

- Basic Introductory Course: This course is usually eight or ten two-hour sessions. Often one session will be devoted to the business side of playgroups and another to safety and first aid, but the basic

aim is still to "explore child's play in a little more depth than the basic course" (Crowe, 1983, p.101).

- PPA Foundation Course: The purpose of this course is to improve "adult sensitivity to the needs of children, emotional, social, intellectual, aesthetic and physical, the standard of playgroup presentation and management for the children, and the quality and meaning of parent participation, leading to an understanding of adult relationships within the family and community" (Crowe, 1983, p. 103). This non-credit course consists of 120 hours of study on a one or two year program. Upon completion of the course the student is eligible to become a play leader but does not receive a diploma.

A visit was made to one hour of a first semester and one hour of a second semester PPA Foundation Course being given at Thomas Danby College in Leeds. Similar courses are offered throughout Britain, but the administration is flexible enough to take advantage of any available funding. In Leeds, the tutor's (teacher's) salaries are paid by the Leeds Education Service. In this particular case the two tutors were hired at an hourly rate as part time staff at a College of Further Education (CFE), an institution similar to our community colleges. Both women held Nursery-Infant School Credentials, but that was not a prerequisite for teaching.

The topic in the first semester class was "Creative Play". The teacher and students discussed different types of creative play and the reasons children needed it. The approach was more subjective and pragmatic than developmental in that, within the limits of a particular kind of creative play (for example, role playing), they did not discuss age or developmental differences. The second hour of the

class period focused on practical applications, such as how to set up a housekeeping corner.

The second semester class was studying programs available to families through Leeds Family Service. The students were divided into small groups, and each group was asked to describe a situation which might occur in a playgroup and would require outside help. The problem was then passed to the next table to suggest solutions. All problems and solutions were then discussed by the entire class. It was an interesting, thoughtful discussion. Three of the four problems involved battered children and the fourth was about a child with AIDS. In the last case, no real solution was reached.

The Playgroups

In 1980-1981, the PPA conducted a study to investigate the effects of playgroups on the lives of the children and families using them. The results, based on the responses of 459 mothers from 32 playgroups in England and Wales, were classified according to how the groups were administered and to what extent mothers helped or were welcome in the group. The administrative groups were designated as: 1) Parent-run, 2) Private (includes Church sponsored), and 3) Groups run by social workers. The parent involvement classifications were 1) help and welcome, 2) help only, 3) welcome only and 4) neither help nor welcome (Families in Playgroups, 1982).

The study concluded that all playgroups helped mothers by.providing a safe place for their children to play. The parents who sent their children to private, no-help playgroups tended to have the most friends and interests outside the home. Mothers who helped on

a rota basis but did not feel welcome to "drop in" did not appear to develop confidence in their parenting skills. The mothers who both helped and were welcome appeared to gain the most confidence in themselves and enjoy the experience the most (Families in Playgroups, 1982).

The city of Leeds has 214 registered playgroups serving between 5,500 and 6,000 children, compared to 21 full day family centers with places for 865 children . The following five playgroups represent as culturally diverse a selection as possible. They have been unofficially classified according their positions in the PPA study.

The Moortown Baptist Playgroup

This playgroup is located in church rooms in a middle class area of Leeds.

Administration. This was a church sponsored program without outside parents on the playgroup committee. The church did not charge rent because it considered the playgroup as part of its community outreach program. The group was insured by and registered with the PPA for £33 per year. Fees were £1 per morning; the class met four times per week with an enrollment of 24 children. The play leader was paid £5 per morning and the three paid assistants received somewhat less. The staff included one rota mother each morning to satisfy the legal requirement of one adult to five children. The play leader had attended playgroup with her first child as a "mum", then took the PPA Foundation Course, served as an assistant and had recently become head leader. She considered her job as her volunteer service to the church and the little money she

earned was enough to "keep her husband happy". The sessional breaks and the part time work allowed her to be with her three small children and she hoped to continue even after her youngest child entered school.

Program. The program schedule was similar to all of the groups visited in Leeds.

9:15 - 10:30: Free choice of crafts, paints, manipulative toys, play house. One room was reserved for wheel toys and gross motor play.

10:30 - 10:45: Music and finger play.

10:45 - 10:50: Milk and biscuits.

10:50 - 11:30: More free play but with a different choice of activities.

11:30: Story time.

11:50: Dismissal.

Observations:. According to the vicar, most of the mothers did not work. He felt that the playgroup served the isolated, perhaps depressed, young mother. Although the play leaders must be members of the congregation, no preferences were given to members' children for enrollment in the group.

This was of a well-run nursery school, similar to many in the United States. It could be classified as a privately run, "mothers welcome" group because of the caring and concern of the leaders and the vicar's interest in the group.

St Philip's Centre Playgroup

This playgroup is located in a church hall separate from the sanctuary in a working class neighborhood east of Leeds city center.

Administration. The playgroup committee consisted of the vicar, the staff, and ten parents. The vicar officially hired the staff and the playgroup rented the hall for £2 per session. Otherwise, the church was not involved with the group.

The head play leader, who was paid £28 per week for five morning sessions, was an accredited nursery nurse with three years training at a technical college. The two assistants, each of whom were paid £22 per week, either had attended a PPA Foundation Course or were in training. The playgroup enrolled 30 children per session but planned on 25 attending. The legal adult-child ratio was maintained with three paid staff and two rota mothers. The parent's fee of £.65 per session was supposed to cover regular operating expenses such as salaries, rent, insurance, PPA membership, and snack.

The group received no special funds. Materials were bought from fund raising proceeds. However, if the group was actually unable to meet expenses, PPA would provide up to £90 per year in three installments. The playgroup had been in continual operation for many years with the same leader for the past six years.

Program. The schedule was one half hour shorter than that at Moortown but similar in content and structure. The children were able to use two rooms, one reserved for more vigorous play, and in

good weather they could play on a small, unprotected grassy area outside. The equipment had to be set up and put away every day.

Observations The program was decidedly play oriented. The children were not as verbal as those at Moortown; one set of twins did not talk at all. The cognitive learning was low key--counting songs and occasional questions such as "What color cup do you want?", in addition to puzzles and manipulative toys.

Most of the children came from two parent families although some of the fathers were unemployed and some mothers worked. According to the play leader, few of the parents were involved in the playgroup; they just dropped the children off and picked them up. These parents were often surprised to learn that the teachers' salaries came just from fees. "Don't you get Council money?" they asked.

The St. Philips Centre Playgroup is a typical low budget operation. The parent committee and the use of rota mothers place it in the "parent-run", "help only" category.

St Andrews Church Playgroup

This playgroup is located in one rather small church room in a middle to upper middle class neighborhood in Leeds.

Administration. This was a private, non profit nursery school run by the play leader. The parents participated only during fund raising drives. Classes met five mornings and two afternoons a week with each child usually attending two or three times per week. Their ages ranged from two and a half to almost five. Twenty children were enrolled for each session at the cost of £1.30 per session. The play leader hired two assistants and paid them £2.50 per session. A

student completed the adult-child ratio of one to five. Her other major expenses were: rent of £28 per week, PPA insurance and dues of £1 per week, and snacks and ongoing craft materials. Large equipment and major toys were bought with money from fund raisers.

Program The schedule was similar to the ones at the two preceding playgroups. Although the room was quite small, there were many activities: easel paints, a glue craft, manipulative toys, climbing apparatus and housekeeping corner. The children played well and used all of the materials. They were more verbal than the children at St. Philip's but, again, the leaders did not attempt any specific cognitive exercises with the children.

Observations. The leader said that she was trained in the Montesorri method and incorporated the ideas in her playgroup. She was not sorry that parents did not participate, saying that she would rather they stay at home than sit along the wall and not help.

One assistant said that most parents tried to get their children in a government nursery class for the year prior to infant school. However, it was always full with a long waiting list. She preferred the nursery class for her own daughter over the playgroup because it offered more structure and more pre-reading experiences.

According to the PPA Study, parents who send their children to private, no help playgroups tend to have a well developed support system outside of playgroup. This appeared to be the case at St. Andrews, where the Playgroup satisfied the needs of the participating families although it did not present a good example of the Playgroup Philosophy.

The Headingly Lane Play Group

This playgroup is located in St. Colombo Church Hall in Headingly, a mixed neighborhood of students, young professionals and older people. The playgroup has the use of one large room, a hall, kitchen, and a smaller, "quiet room".

Administration A committee of ten parents, representing about sixty families, took care of all business and hired and paid the leaders. The church hall rent was £30 per week. The playgroup accommodated twenty five children per session with a staff of the head play leader, two paid assistants, and two rota mothers. The play leader, who trained with the PPA Foundation Course, was paid £7 per morning (the highest rate in Leeds, she said) and the assistants, both ex-teachers, received about £4 per session. Parents fees were £1 per session per child. The playgroup had existed since 1969 with just two leaders.

Program. The large room contained the usual craft tables, manipulative toys, climbing apparatus and housekeeping corner,. The quiet room was minimally furnished with a craft table, a book corner, and a table for quiet play. The children, aged two and a half to four, were verbal, busy and creative. The play leader stressed creative play and problem solving and had an excellent rapport with the children. On the morning of the visit one of the rota mothers was from Yemen and spoke no English. She sat at one table the entire morning, helping in a small way the children who came to her. In warm weather the children used the adjoining park as a play area.

Observations This was the most exciting playgroup that I visited. Some of the children were involved in imaginary play,

others were looking at books in the quiet room and some were working on a special craft for Guy Fawkes Day. The leader's comments were the kind that extended the children's thinking. Many mothers stayed to chat instead of just dropping their children and running. The play leader said that she loved her work because she enjoyed children--not because of the money. She was a strong believer in the PPA philosophy that children learn through play.

> I had an interesting conversation with an assistant leader and a mother with five young children. Both women had part time jobs in a College of Further Education and were paid £9 per hour. We talked about the low salaries of play leaders. The assistant commented that the government felt no pressure to provide free nursery education for all four year olds since the PPA was such a strong and efficient organization. She felt that the PPA was working against its own original position of being an interim solution until the government provided the education. However, they both wondered if the government would have filled the need if there had not been a PPA. (D. Curtis, personal journal, November 5, 1986).

The young mother had been on a committee to hire new staff but had resigned because she was embarrassed by the low wages that they could pay. The qualifications of a good playgroup leader were hard to find: a caring, knowledgeable, qualified leader who has ability in crafts and music to work with 25 children and four adults for three hours each weekday morning. Expected to spend extra time in preparation. Pay: £5 - £7 per morning. No benefits.

One of the findings of the PPA study, "Families in Playgroups", was that mothers in parent run playgroups are "more than twice as likely as mothers in private playgroups to express some disappointment with the playgroup" (1982, p.45). The researchers decided that when parents participate and are responsible for what goes on, criticism is inevitable. These same mothers say that playgroup helps them understand their children better and gives them more confidence in bringing up their children. The women at the Headingly Playgroup fell neatly into the category of critical, involved and confident parents. The playgroup was truly an extension of the home.

Hilton Place Baptist Church Playgroup

This was a new playgroup which met in the church hall in a racially integrated neighborhood.

Administration:. The playgroup was sponsored by the church which did not charge rent. The group had not reached full enrollment of twenty five children per session, but they were filling up quickly. The staff consisted of the play leader, two paid assistants, and at least one rota mother. The fees of £1 per session appeared to be enough to handle operating expenses. The group had received £75 start-up money from the City Council, and they had borrowed large equipment such as a trampoline, slide and "Wendy house" from the PPA toy loan.

The play leader and assistants were all taking the PPA Foundation Course at Thomas Danby College. All of the leaders were "Christians" and the head leader was a member of the church. She had not wanted to be the head teacher but was persuaded by church

members who "prayed for guidance" and selected her. The playgroup staff met together every Wednesday at lunch to pray and plan their next week's schedule. Although the leaders were clearly devout women, their religious beliefs did not seem to intrude upon the class.

Program On the day that of the visit to the playgroup, eighteen Black, white, and Asian children were running about the room. The schedule was similar to the other playgroups but less structured. The volunteer rota mother was a visitor from Australia, happy to find a place for her son. The other volunteer was an Indian grandfather who came every morning with his grandson. The children played, listened to a story, sang songs and generally enjoyed themselves. The building was about to be remodeled and was in a general state of disrepair.

Observations. The women worked hard and cheerfully under the difficult circumstances of remodelling and with no outside play area. They said that many mothers worked, some were single parents, and some families were under considerable stress. This playgroup clearly offered a necessary service to the community but there was some concern among the leaders that they might not have the energy to continue. It classified as "private" and "help only" because it was not ready at that time to provide the additional service of a support group for parents. The leaders had their hands full with the children.

Conclusions

What will the future bring to the playgroup movement? Some of the problems that they face are:

1. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find competent play leaders.

2. In England, women may take a one year maternity leave with a job guarantee. Formerly, women planned to stay at home with their young children for four or five years and then re-enter the job market. Now, with high unemployment, more women return to full time work after the one year leave. PPA has almost no programs for the working parent.

3. Inner city playgroups have always been hard to keep going. In some cities, Social Services has sent peripatetic teachers into low economic neighborhoods to lead playgroups. The groups have been successful but, since the teachers are paid regular Social Services salaries, they are not self supporting.

4. Playgroups are of a highly variable quality. Anyone may apply to run one. The DHSS has to approve the site and license the group. Advisors may point out physical dangers, but child rearing practices are more difficult to supervise. A professor of education at Leeds University said that many educational opportunities are probably lost in the play oriented environment of play groups. She thought that play leaders did not extend thinking the way a well trained nursery teacher would. However, she also thought that the PPA stressed play because it felt that the other option of untrained leaders pushing reading and early rote learning would be worse (P. Bennett, personal communication, November 5, 1986).

5. The playgroups versus nursery class controversy is increasing. The National Union of Teachers, the Trades Unions Congress and the women's movement have opposed a lasting role for

playgroups. "Acceptance of PPAs value in helping to publicise the educational needs of the age group has been qualified by the suspicion that it is a body of amateurs, providing a cheap substitute for professional staff and purpose-built premises" (PPA and Its Past, 1979, p.4).

The strength of the Preschool Playgroup Association seems to lie in its ability to adjust to the times. It is now caught up in the web of a falling birth rate and earlier school entrance. Nursery classes are accepting children barely three years old, the primary age group for playgroups. Most early childhood professionals agree with the PPA that these children are too young for formal schooling. The Social Services director of the "Under Fives" programs in Leeds summed up the problem by saying, "A good nursery class and a good playgroup should offer the child the same experience but playgroups offer support for the mother as well" (M. Rowbotham. personal communication, October 24, 1986).

In recent years PPA has welcomed Mother-Toddler groups and has been interested in children in hospitals, gypsies and ethnic minorities, one parent families, "battered babies" and children with mental and physical handicaps. The Runnymeade Playgroup in London has instituted an extended day program which is open during school hours (Bruner, 1980),

As PPA has grown, it has enlarged its concern for families with young children to include a greater community. The Association states its purpose:

> PPA exists to help parents to understand and provide for the needs of their young children. It aims to promote community

situations in which parents can with growing enjoyment and confidence make the best use of their own knowledge and resources in the development of their children and themselves ("PPA and Its Past", 1979).

The movement is stronger than ever.

CHAPTER FOUR

STATE AND MUNICIPAL CHILD CARE PROGRAMS IN ITALY

Italy's long history of innovative programs for young children began early in the nineteenth century and continued through the Montessori period. This was followed by a period of retrenchment during the Fascist regime and World War II. The commitment of the government to support pre-school day care programs since 1968 has been tempered by fiscal priorities. However, within the formidable bureaucracy of the Italian government, innovative programs are still being supported. The focus of this chapter is on two such experimental programs in Rome and one in northern Italy.

This study will include a brief history of Italian pre-school education, and a review of the development of early childhood programs since 1968 with a focus on the funding, administration and teacher preparation of State supported and locally supported "scuole materne". The children's program in a typical scuola materna and two experimental programs in Rome and one in northern Italy will be described in detail. In the conclusion, changes in educational philosophy are discussed in the light of current American pedagogical thinking.

History of Preschool Education in Italy

The nineteenth century was a period of great political, social and economic unrest for the Italian people. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the defeat of Napoleon, Austria acquired controlling power over all of the Italian States except for Rome and

the Papal States (a large area cutting across the peninsula east from Rome to the Adriatic Sea and including Bologna to the north) which were under the jurisdiction of Pope Pius VII. Between 1815 and 1870 when Italian troops finally entered Rome and geographical unification of Italy was completed, the country was in constant turmoil or revolution.

It was against this background of social unrest that a young priest, Ferrante Aporti, opened the first fee-paying infant school for middle-class children in Lombardy in 1827. The first "official school" was sanctioned by the Austrian authorities in 1829. Aporti was pleased with the results of his efforts.

> Physically, the children gained in health and strength. Children whose legs were too weak to support them, when first admitted, benefited so much from the gymnastic games included in the curriculum that they were able to use their legs freely. They learned to keep themselves and their clothes clean. They became more restrained in their behavior; they got on well with each other and began to take a delight in keeping order. Intellectually their prowess was well known. Although the school had been in existence only a matter of weeks, a public examination was held on 11th May, 1829. An invitation to be present was extended to parents, friends and dignitaries, including the Inspector for the Province, and all the children, from the six-year olds down to the two-year olds, were put through their paces (Wilson, 1979, p.222).

Aporti opened the first free infant school for boys in 1831 and a second class for poor girls in 1833. The movement spread quickly

and by 1844 there were infant schools in almost every state in Italy, except for Rome where the movement was opposed by Pope Gregory XVI who considered them not only dangerous, but wicked. In any case, the movement was a rocky one, flourishing at times of popular uprisings and retrenching during periods of subjugation. It was fueled both by the Industrial Revolution and the struggle for Italian unification; the first was concerned with the need to get the children of working mothers safe and off the street, and the second with the push of the liberal and patriotic forces to expand the base of an educated society. Thus, the type of day care provided ranged from "charity custodial" to the "charity scholastic". The free schools were created as a welfare provision for families in extreme need and were, in most cases, run by the Catholic Church or charity organizations (Fleming, 1982 and Wilson, 1979).

"The Aporti curriculum, based on the child's curiosity, his love of story and song and on his tendency to read, write and count, had three sections; intellectual, moral and physical" (Wilson. 1979 p. 229). His ultimate aim was to develop in children a strong religious and moral sense, but not at the expense of intellectual development or a child's "natural inclinations."

By 1890, the concepts of Froebel, such as the emphasis on expressive and creative activities and the role of play, were beginning to be accepted. In Italy, these ideas were interpreted through the writings of Rosa and Carla Agazzi, two pre-school teachers in Lombardy.

Their method is based on the idea that all the child knows is play and has to be taught everything by means of play; it

> refuses to use specific educational techniques or structured materials and emphasizes the *mothering* character of the school. It also stresses the importance of social development, although its scope is confined to the family and the class group; the use of *cheap* everyday material and of free and spontaneous activities, such as painting, drawing, and story telling is encouraged (Mantovani, p.179).

The Agazzi method, which stressed the family structure and vertical age grouping as a model, gained rapid popularity in Italy and retains it to this day. Criticisms of the method include the questioning of the validity of a domestic-oriented education for young children at the expense of an intellectual one and some concerns about the teacher education, or lack of it, generated by this philosophy.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) is internationally the most famous Italian pre-school educator. In 1896 she became the first woman in Italy to take the University degree of Doctor of Medicine and was soon appointed assistant doctor at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Rome. Her initial work with patients in insane asylums led to an interest in retarded children who were housed with adult inmates and basically abandoned. As a result of her lectures on the education of the retarded, the Orthophrenic School, funded by the state, was founded under the direction of Dr. Montessori. After two years, the children classified as "hopelessly deficient" and mentally retarded were given regular examinations "with children of the elementary County Council School in Rome and they did better than these normal children." The examiners were

amazed and declared it a miracle. "But she herself was looking at this 'miracle' from the other side. The question she was asking herself was, 'How could one keep healthy, normal children on a lower level than mentally defective ones?'" (Fleming, 1982, p. 31), She was convinced that her methods of teaching were the clue.

In 1907, the district of San Lorenzo was undergoing an urban renewal program which included setting aside one room in each renovated apartment complex for the unattended children under the age of six whose parents were both working. Dr. Montessori was asked to direct these Case dei Bambini (Children's Houses), thus opening the way for her to test her methods on normal children. She attempted to create a classroom where children could reproduce the "patterns of culture that surround them" (Stevens, 1965, p.30) in a child oriented space. According to Stevens, "the central concern of the Montessori educational method is to create a learning environment in which the child can acquire the tools of his culture without losing his sense of initiative." (1965, p.30). In a Montessori class the child can choose among a variety of "learning games" which lend themselves to mastery of some aspect of his culture. "Montessori students are initiated into a non directive learning situation within which they are channeled into activities leading to a mastery of the three dominant systems of human society: reading, writing and mathematics" (Stevens, 1965, p. 31).

According to Montessori, the school should be an institution of learning and not an agency of social adjustment. Fleming states this as one source of criticism among Italian educators:

> The highly-structured Montessori model offers a limited setting for social interaction and free expression among children and their teachers. According to some Italian experts, this, in turn, hinders both the development of problem-solving abilities and language. It is a philosophy which emphasizes things rather than people, work rather than play (1982, pp.32-33).

The influence of the Agazzi sisters in Italian "scuole materne" (a name they are supposed to have originated) today is greater than that of Maria Montessori. In 1976, only 6% of the nations pre-school teachers followed the Montessori method (Fleming, 1982). According to Mantovani,

> Montessori's influence is not at all relevant, except for a relatively small number of schools, most of which are private. Even there--with a few exceptions--what seems to survive of Montessori's philosophy are the metaphysical views of her later years and the materials she invented which are employed rather mechanically; her faith in the values of childhood and her mistrust of the educational capacities of the family often caused the isolation of the child from the world around him. The core of her work, namely the heavy stress on the importance of systematic observation of the child so as to be able to assess and follow his developmental rhythm and of the appropriate use of the materials as well as the stress on all the activities that can foster attention and concentration seem to be greatly undervalued (1978, p. 178).

Both the Agazzi and Montessori methods continued to expand in Italy until the beginning of the Fascist regime in 1922. At that

time all Montessori schools were closed but were soon re-opened after Dr. Montessori convinced Mussolini that her schools represented no political party and no religion. Mussolini and his Minister of Education, Giovani Gentile, became strong supporters of Montessori. The government sponsored yearly international Montessori congresses in Rome in 1930, 31, 32 and 34.. However, in 1936 the Minister of Education suddenly and without explanation closed all Montessori schools in Italy. They were not to re-open until 1947. Maria Montessori left Italy in 1934 and never returned there to live (Smaridge, 1965).

In the meantime, even though the Agazzi method received official recognition during the Fascist regime, Rosa Agazzi did not let herself be intimidated by political orders. In 1958, in the first government report on the state of nursery schools in Italy, much of the "whole child" philosophy of the Agazzi sisters had been adopted.

Development of Early Childhood Programs Since 1968. On March 18, 1968 the government passed the Education Law #444 which, for the first time, made provisions for State-supported nursery schools (Scuole Materne Statali) Locally supported nursery schools (Scuole Materne Comunali) were begun as early as 1934; however, in 1969, 95% of children attending Italian preschools went to private ones, usually sponsored by Catholic organizations (Fleming, 1982).

Article 1 of Law #444 states that "pre-school children, from three to six, are received in the Nursery with the aim of educating them and developing their personalities, thus assisting them, with family cooperation, for their future attendance at the Primary school"

(Fleming, 1982 p. 36). Traditionally, the vast majority of nursery schools have been located in the affluent northern regions of Italy. Many fine schools supported by industrial communities with Socialist or Communist governments were, and still are, in operation. Law #444 promised equality of opportunity to all children and gave priority to the depressed areas largely in the south.

According to Mantovani (1979), the core of the law, as far as educational principles and curricula contents are concerned, lies in the "Orientamenti" which, although adequate in many respects, shows the "compromising character of the official pre-school policy" (p. 176).

> The text of the regulations emphasizes that the teacher should respect the developmental stages of the child and integrate the educational function of the family without replacing it. It also states the main areas of the educational programme and the qualifications teachers should have. Definitive and sound directions are mixed with vague and questionable statements. The teacher is supposed "to be able to love children" or "to be optimistic and have a good sense of humour" (art. N.5); no hint is given as to how to assess such qualities. The teacher is also supposed to have a good cultural background and a specific psycho-educational preparation; however, there are no provisions or suggestions for changes in the existing teachers' training colleges, which are patently inadequate in this respect and which are the only recognized source for teacher recruitment.

> It is explicitly stated that no rigid curriculum should be designed; preschools are not viewed as a preparation for school, mainly intended to give the child basic 'academic' skills, but rather as an opportunity to encourage spontaneous development and free expression. A list is given of the main areas in which the teacher shall foster the child's development, the first being religious education, followed by emotional, moral, and social education, play, language development, and motor and expressive activities (1978, p.177).

Since the Mantovani article was published in 1979, modifications have been made to the 1968 law. According to Dr. Guiseppe Velardo, Law #444 stated specifically that the State educational system should 1) assist and 2) educate children. However, financial cutbacks have forced changes and now the state is legally responsible for education only. Since nursery schools are under the "assist" category, they were among the first to feel the pinch. For example, State-supported nursery schools used to be open at least ten months per year for 8 - 10 hours per day. Now pupil days have been cut to nine months and the hours have become an inflexible 8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.. This has led many working parents to choose community supported or private day care with their more flexible hours (personal communication, September 15, 1988).

The two aspects of early childhood education that have an enormous impact on publicly supported nursery schools are teacher preparation and the financial and administrative responsibilities of State and local governments.

Teacher Preparation

Compulsory education in Italy ends at age 14 with a diploma from the scuola media (middle school). Students are then able to enter a Scuola Magistrale (Preschool Training Institute) for a three year course leading to the Diploma di abilitazione (Preprimary Teaching Certificate). In 1982 there were approximately two hundred teacher training institutes in Italy with an estimated eight being State run; nearly all of the others are sponsored by the Catholic Church (Fleming, 1982 p.44).

The preschool law does not prescribe a framework of study and there is no standard quality of education. According to Mantovani, "the curriculum of these teachers' training colleges provides very little information about development or educational psychology; courses in education are historically oriented...; practical training is almost nonexistent" (1978, p.176). In theory a seventeen year old woman can become a preschool teacher. However, before working for the State, she must pass a national written and oral examination which takes place every two years to assign jobs all over the country.

The system is producing many more teachers than it can employ. There is increasing pressure to increase the educational requirements to four years of the Scuola Magistrale plus two years of University level training. According to Dr. Velardo, a bill has been proposed to raise the educational requirements of all preschool teachers to the university level (personal communication, September 15, 1988).

The quality of teaching is of concern to many Italian educators. Margiola Pignatari, Editor of the Montessori magazine, Vita

dell'Infanzia wrote concerning the present and future of the scuola materna, "The first stage (of reforms) should be concerned with the....reorganization of the Scuola Magistrale" (August, 1987, p. 5) Fleming quotes two Italian educators who expressed concern that some fourteen year olds choose preschool teaching because the training course is one year shorter than most secondary courses. They also question whether or not a seventeen year old is mature enough to be in complete charge of a large group of preschool children (1982).

Most preschool training institutes (scuole magistrale) offer little, if any, student teaching experiences. Mantovani attributes this "hostility to the technicalities of teaching" to the influence of the Agazzi method which stresses the 'mothering' aspects of a school.

> In some respects, it has strongly hindered the progress of preschool practices; the spontaneity it values so much has become an excuse to conceal the basic incompetencies and lack of specific education of too many teachers, and this has brought about a merely custodial function of the school. Against this general background--the overrating of spontaneity and the lack of specific training--a kind of anti-authoritarian trend began to make itself felt in 1968 (1978, p. 179).

Inside the classroom the teacher is expected to abide by the broad curriculum directives but has almost complete autonomy as to her teaching techniques. The quality of teaching, therefore, is not subject to easy control. "This situation of absolute and uncontrolled freedom and autonomy of teaching can enhance the sense of responsibility and effort on the part of the most conscientious

teachers, but it can also encourage and permit forms of laziness and idleness."(Marradi, 1979, p. 60). The quality difference exists not only between schools but also between individual classes within schools.

The second area of concern is the traditionally low salary of the nursery school teacher. However, the teachers of the State supported nursery schools have just negotiated a new contract with the State. As of October 1, 1988, salaries range from 1.4 million to 1.5 million lire per month ($1000 - $1075) for 27 hours per week of teaching time plus an additional 80 hours per year in non teaching responsibilities and 40 hours per year in additional training. According to the office of the Third Council District in Rome, teachers of locally supported nursery schools receive about 1.2 million lire per month ($900) for 24 teaching hours per week. The assistant to the Council president said, "Even the janitors make more." These low salaries and difficulties in obtaining a tenured job are discouraging to many women and most men. In 1988 there were sixteen male preschool teachers in all of Italy! (L. Celía, personal comunication, September 24, 1988).

The Child Care Centers

Administration of Publicly Supported Centers

To the average parent of a preschool child in Rome, a nursery school is either free or private and whether a particular school is a scuola materna statale or a scuola materna comunale makes little difference. All publicly supported programs are located in existing elementary schools, usually in a separate wing of the building and

often both types of classes are at the same location. However, there are real differences in funding and administration.

The State schools are governed by Law #444. The director (principal) of the elementary school is also the director of the State preschool. It is his responsibility to purchase materials, furnishings and equipment for the nursery school out of his total school budget for supplies and to hire and supervise the teachers. According to Antonio Galati, director of an elementary school in Rome, the director sets general policy within the guidelines of the 1968 law. However, since many changes in education have occurred since 1968, it is up to the individual director to institute these changes in the curriculum at his school (personal communication, September 21, 1988).

The cost to the state is approximately 2,150,000 lire ($1535) per child per school year. This includes teacher salaries, cost of administration and instructional services, furnishings, equipment and instructional in-service training. It does not include the building and building maintenance which are the responsibility of the local government. or school lunches which are paid for by the parents of children attending a full day. (Velardo, personal communication, September 15, 1988). As stated earlier, teachers' salaries are determined by Union contract.

The scuole materne comunali are supported entirely by local administrations. The school director is responsible for providing space for the classes and basic operating expenses. The local government provides materials and supplies, pays teachers' salaries and is responsible for the quality of the program. In Rome, the local districts provide very little in supplies and materials or support

personnel for the preschool teachers so that each school (and sometimes each classroom) operates as a single, often isolated, unit. This is not true in certain northern Italian cities where the communities invest much more money in their preschool programs. According to Mantovani, the greater flexibility of their structure, the higher stability of the teaching staff and the better opportunities for self government allow municipal schools to initiate innovative programs more easily than the rigid structure of State schools permits (1978) Even in Rome, the municipal schools offered working parents the option of a longer day.

Dr. Velardo of the Ministry of Public Instruction was not able to provide the cost per child for the "comunali" nursery schools. Neither the president of the Third District Council in Rome (Il presidente del consiglio circoscrizionale, III circoscrizione), who is nominally in charge of these schools, nor anyone in his office could provide the information. Everyone said that it was impossible to know. Eventually one woman guessed "maybe about 400,000 lire ($285) per day per class of 20-25 children--but that is purely a guess". It is generally agreed that the "comunali" schools are more expensive to operate because of differences in administration and the fact that school buildings and maintenance are a local responsibility.

In 1969, 95% of the children attending preschools went to non State-supported schools. The majority of these were run by Catholic organizations but a small percentage were locally funded. By the end of 1975, State schools drew 26% of the preschool population, community-supported schools serviced 35%, and the private

(generally Catholic) around 40%. By 1988, the percentages had changed to 50% State, 16% Municipal and 34% private (Fleming, 1982; Mantovani, 1978; and Velardo, personal communication, September 15, 1988).

Table 2
Children Enrolled in State and Local Schools

	State schools 1987-1988 (scuole materne statali)	Local schools1986-1987 (scuole materne comunali)
No. of schools	14,224	3,206
Class sessions per day	35,264	7,857
Enrolled children	800,453	256,858

During the period from 1981 to 1988, the total preschool population dropped from 1,852,429 to 1,600,317. This reflects a dramatic drop in the number of children between the ages of three to five in Italy. During the last decade, Italy has experienced a less than zero population growth (The unofficial number was given as 1.6 children per couple.) with the smallest families being in the prosperous north. According to the article, "Bambini D'Italia" in the magazine section of La Republica (1988, September 9), the national registry office reported in 1987 that there were finally more births registered than deaths and that the period of zero population had stopped although the population curve is still skewed to the south. Thus it appears that the State schools are attracting a growing percentage of a diminishing preschool aged population.

Italy is generally divided into four unofficial geographical regions; the North, Central, South and the Islands. The economic, cultural and language differences among the regions are enormous.

A high birth rate in the poorer South and Islands regions means that the State supported nursery schools tend to be better funded than the municipal nursery schools in these areas. Many communities in the South have no municipal nursery schools at all and many small towns have no organized care for preschool children (Pusci, 1988).

Although this research is concerned primarily with the programs for children aged three to five, mention should be made of the infant day care centers, called "asili nido". Prior to 1971, the custodial care of young children was run by a welfare organization called ONMI (Opera Nazionale Maternita e Infanzia) instituted in 1925 during the Fascist regime. According to Mantovani, these centers "all had the negative marks of residential institutions" (1978, p. 185).

The law for public day care was passed in December, 1971, mainly under pressure of the Unions and a women's association called Unione Donne d'Italia (Women's Union of Italy). This law made it possible to construct new centers outside of ONMI to be supported mainly by the State but governed by parents and the local community. Funding is based on a .01% tax levied on the income of every employer with more than fifty employees (Saltz, 1988).

In a study of "asili nido" published by the city of Rome, the authors state

> The new asilo nido can then be considered.....overcoming all existing prejudices that considered the necessary care of the small child limited to hygienic-health and custodial assistance. (referring to the ONMI asili) In contrast to this view, one places the primary focus of the new nido in the area of the

psychological and pedagogical reality of the child (Ammaniti and Benigni, 1979, p. 7).

And in a country where women's primary responsibilities are still domestic, the authors continue:

> Today, the State has put to itself the problem of reentry of the woman into public life, of her desire of realizing her own independence and of developing her own personality on the equal of man. The law no. 1044 (art.1) says that "the asili nido have the ability to provide for the temporary custody of children in order to assure adequate assistance to all of the family and also to facilitate the access of the woman to work in the picture of a complete system of social security" (1979, p. 17).

The Italians are proud of the fact that admission to an asilo nido is not need based, although some priority is given to children at risk. In Rome, parents pay from 50,000 lire ($35) to 85,000 lire ($60) per month, depending on income, with no charge for those unable to pay. However, the financial cutbacks during the 1980's in Italy have prevented full development of the infant day care centers, In Rome's Third District with a population of about 85,000 people, only one public asilo nido was operating. In this blue collar, working class district, only sixty places were available for children between the ages of three months and three years.

The Selection of Centers

In the fall of 1988 all publicly supported nursery schools in Rome opened on September 19. During the preceding two weeks, contact was made with Silvio Moscetti, president of the Third

Municipal District (Il Presidente del Circoscrizionale, III Circoscrizione) for permission to visit one municipal nursery school (scuola materna comunali) and one infant child care center (asilo nido). In addition, Dr. Guiseppe Velardo, acting head of the nursery school division of the Ministry of Public Instruction (Servizio per la Scuola Materna, Ministero della Publica Instruxione), very kindly provided the services of Laura Cialé, a director of an elementary school near Milan on a year's leave at the Ministry of Public Instruction, and Antonia Gregorio, who acted as a translator. Dr. Velardo then arranged two days of visitations to two experimental, State supported programs in Rome.

The most widely acclaimed nursery schools in Italy are located in the city of Reggio Emilia in the northern region of Emilia Romana. These will also be described.

Scuola Materna Comunale "Saffi"

The Saffi elementary school (Scuola Elementare "Saffi") is a plain, block long, three story building facing a narrow, crowded street in San Lorenzo, just outside the wall in the south eastern section of Rome. Many rooms are now unused, the result of the low birthrate and the demographic changes of the neighborhood as families age and younger families move to the more affordable suburbs. The nursery school uses one wing of the second floor of the elementary school.

The first visit to Saffi occurred during the pupil-free, teacher-preparation period in early September. I was able to converse with the head teacher, Signora Panepucci-Nella, and the other teachers in a mixture of Italian, Spanish and international gestures. This

nursery school holds six morning classes which meet from 8:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. and two afternoon classes which run from 12:30 to 4:30 P.M.. The afternoon classes serve the "full-day" students who eat lunch and stay until they are picked up by their parents. The school provides a waiting room for children who must come earlier or stay later than the normal school hours. Parents pay a nominal fee for this service plus 33,000 lire ($24) per month for school lunches. One additional room is reserved for active play, such as jogging, gymnastics and music, and an outside roof terrace is occasionally used.

Each class consists of approximately 20 children and one teacher (except for one class with 16 children, including two who are handicapped.) When asked if the teachers followed a particular program, Signora Panepucci-Nella replied that there was no general municipal philosophy but that each school was free to determine its own program. She felt that it was better not to follow a set plan because when children were ready to learn something, they would learn. She hoped that the children would be ready for the first grade when they left Saffi, but it was not her "obligation" to prepare them for that.

All of the teachers at Saffi had received their preschool teacher's certificate from a preschool training institute (scuola magistrale, for students 14 to 17 years old) and the lead teacher had an additional two years training. Each teacher taught for four hours a day, six days a week and was paid between 900,000 lire ($642) and 1,300,000 lire ($928) per month. Benefits included the two month summer vacation, sick leave and medical insurance. The

teachers do not hold scheduled meetings or conferences with parents. Senora Panepucci-Nella thought that most of the parents were of the working class, not professional people and, although some mothers worked full time, most worked part time or not at all. She could think of only one child in a school with 120 preschool children whose parents were separated!

On a return visit to Saffi on September 21, school had been in session just three days. Although the teachers apologized for the confusion, everything seemed in good order.

At 10:00 in the lead teacher's class., the eighteen children present were seated at five small tables eating snacks which they had brought from home. All of the children were wearing smocks over their school clothes. While the children ate, Signora Panepucci-Nella explained her program by showing a big box of sample activities which she had used over the years. The box was full of beautifully executed paper activities. For example, a springtime activity consisted of painting and punching-out a cardboard tree and then decorating it with painted, punched-out fruit. The children did the punching-out and painting; the teacher made the design. She explained that the municipal district gives them no money for art supplies. It all comes from the teachers' pockets or "a little from the parents". In her class the three year olds drew with pencils; only the older children were allowed to use markers. The precious few manipulative toys were carefully put away out of sight until later in the morning.

At 10:25 in another clasroom the children were still eating their snacks. The teacher explained that it was only the third day of

class, she had many three year olds who were separating from their mothers for the first time, and some children had been crying. She felt that her job with the small children was to talk to them and be close to them and not insist upon a lot of pre-writing activities.

> Soon the children who had finished eating put their lunch boxes back into their backpacks, formed a circle with the teacher and played a circle game which they all enjoyed while the others sat at the tables playing with their food or just watching the game. After the song, a few children approached me shyly and I asked them their names and ages. Suddenly the teacher told me that it was time for me to visit another classroom because my presence was interfering with the class. As I hurriedly left, I realized that I was probably the first real visitor she had seen during her five years at Saffi (D. Curtis, personal journal, September 21,1988).

By 11:00 the children in the third room had all snacked, been to the bathroom and played some circle games in the large hall. Now they were seated at their tables waiting for the next activity. The teacher asked in a quiet voice, "Who would like Lego?" Many hands went up and several children said "Io" ("I"). The teacher took a big box from the cupboard, looked at all the children and slowly gave one small box of Lego to one child. She then repeated the process of distribution until eventually about one half of the children were given toys which they then shared, without being asked, with the other children. Her method of choosing was not clear; those children who seemed to be most eager were the last to be given a toy.

The teacher spoke briefly about the program. She said that a typical day included a period for preschool skills, snack, manipulative toys, some physical play and some type of coloring activity. The children did not play outside on the terrace regularly because it was so much trouble carrying the equipment out. Occasional special trips were arranged by the municipality.

At 11:30 the older children in the first class were coloring outlines of trees with marking pens while the younger children played at the tables with manipulative toys. Similar activities were in progress in all of the rooms at that time. At 12:30, two-thirds of the children were picked up at the outside entrance by parents or grandparents and the remaining one third joined together in two classes with two different teachers to spend the afternoon eating, resting and playing.

During the course of the morning very few toys and no large motor equipment except a tunnel in the gymnastics room were in evidence. The children had been quiet but quick to erupt into noisy laughter and play--which was all the more noisy because the rooms have very high ceilings and the walls and floors are so bare. The program seemed prescriptive and not very imaginative. However, just one boy was seen crying, there had been no fighting and there was a great deal of sharing and camardarie. The children were quick to laugh, to touch each other and chatter as soon as the teacher's attention was diverted. The atmosphere was not oppressive.

Scuola Materna Statale "Don P. Albera"

The Ministry of Education has a limited amount of money for support of experimental programs in its State supported nursery

schools. In order for a grant proposal to be accepted, it must include a plan for updating curriculum. It may also include experimentation and/or research (A. Galati, personal communication, September 28, 1988). In 1986, the Scuola Materna "Albera" was funded for a three year grant which included all three of these components.

The program was a result of the cooperative efforts of the director of both the elementary and nursery schools, D. D. Matteo Pischedda, the school psychologists and five teachers. The progress has been carefully monitored by psychologist Anna Putton, who has published preliminary results of her research. The name given to this experimental program was "Various Forms of Language for the Total Development of the Child" (Varie Forme di Linguaggi per lo Sviluppo Globale del Bambinio). The researchers hypothesized that

> at the end of the experiment, the children of the experimental group with respect to the control group will present:
>
> a) greater cognitive development, thanks to the intervention in areas of extracurricular discipline (Note: "extracurricular" should be interpreted as meaning "outside the area of usual cognitive activities")
>
> b) greater social maturation, thanks to the structure of the work for the groups and not the structure of the classes (Putton, 1988,pp. 1-2).

The three main objectives of the socio-affective program were

- Modification of teacher/child interactions with the view to developing more equal relations between them and giving the children the opportunity to participate in decisions relating to their scholastic activities.

- Increase of positive relations and cooperation between children
- Improvement of the ability of children to be aware of the feelings and attitudes among themselves and among others (Reunion sur L'enseignement Primaire, 1987).

To implement the program, 75 four and five year old children were placed in five homogeneous groups with about fifteen students each. These children circulate among five teachers, each of whom specializes in at least one area from the disciplines of music, audio-visual, dance, art, perceptual development, motor development, language development and English. Prior to the first year, each teacher had received thirty hours of training to prepare for this new role. In 1987-1988, the teachers experimented with working in pairs, thereby training each other in new roles. In addition, the teachers meet together two times per week to discuss individual problems and help each other find solutions. The three nursery school teachers who did not choose to participate in the new program form the control group for the Putton study.

The visit to the Scuola Materna "Don Albera" was arranged by the Ministry of Education. It included visits to each classroom, conversations with the director, teachers and, support staff and a slide presentation which described the activities of the school.

The school itself is quite new with large corridors, bright classrooms and walls decorated with children's art, including outstanding ceramic work. The nursery school occupies one wing of the second floor but shares common space, such as the gymnasium and the audio-visual room, with the elementary school. The staff

encourages interaction between the preschool and elementary school children.

It is difficult to observe an Italian nursery school class because everything comes to a halt when visitors arrive. When our group of visitors entered the Language Development class, the teacher was reading "Peter Pan" to the children but stopped when we arrived. When asked to continue, the teacher read a few pages, showing the pictures and asking questions. The children responded in unison and enthusiastically. But the director wanted me to see copies of the preceding year's work, as a completed activity would better illustrate the program. Often the teacher gave information to the children who then re-interpreted it in different ways, combining pictures drawn by the young children with words written by children from the elementary school. For example, the teacher read Kipling's "How the Elephant Got His Trunk" to the children who then retold it in their own way. Later, the young children drew sequential pictures of the story and the elementary children wrote the words which the little ones dictated. Next, the teacher showed the children how to reduce their pictures to the the size of a 35 milimeter slide by dividing them into grids. These pictures were then made into slides for their own illustrated story. In all of the examples shown, the children worked from existing material, often with older children. Cooperation and verbal development were stressed.

Each teacher had prepared a written rationale, including objectives and teaching strategies, for the program which she had developed. It was decided to introduce English as a foreign language in order to give children contact with another culture and familiarize

them with common names and phrases used on television and in advertising throughout Italy. This class had evolved so that it consisted of five to seven year olds; the older children returned to the nursery school from the elementary grades for their English lesson. Unfortunately, there had been no follow-up in later grades.

During the observation of the English class, the younger children conversed in simple dialogue sentences such as, "How are you?" "I am fine, thank you." "Where do you live?" and "Would you like to play with me?" Two seven year old boys demonstrated their ability to read and write. The children were very serious, spoke without embarrassment and appeared very proud of themselves.

The preliminary results of the Putton research have been positive. In June, 1987, the researchers reported that

> The first results showed a big scholastic growth of the children and a consequent reduction of absenteism as well as a much greater involvement of the teachers. The test results showed significant differences with a control group in the areas of personality development and social relations. This experience shows that if teachers are trained in the appropriate manner and if psychologists can create a scholarly environment, one can promote the personal and social development of children and encourage the better emotional adjustment of some disturbed children (Reunion sur L'enseignement, 19897, p.1).

The teachers and staff remain excited about their team approach and many parents are anxious to enroll their children. The State grant is approximately $40,000 per year, a modest amount by American standards. But Senor Pischedda explained that Italy is a

"poor country" and that experimental money is hard to get (personal communication September 28,1988).

Scuola Materna Statale "Giovanni Cagliero"

The Giovanni Cagliero Elementary School was built by the Fascist regime in the 1930's. It is an enormous, austere and rigid building with halls "large enough so that the children could march". (L. Celiá, personal communication, September 28, 1988) and almost no outside play area. During the past ten years, the elementary school has shrunk from 92 classes to 25. There is, therefore, enough room to house a municipal nursery school in one wing and a state nursery school in another.

The four classes which make up the State nursery school have received an experimental grant which is designed to improve the program in the areas of affective, cognitive and motor development. The particular focus is on the ethnic diversity of the school population and the need to understand "the socio-economic composition of the families, from the presence of foreign children, nomadic and handicapped children" (Scuola Materna Statale "G. Cagliero", 1988). The director, Antonio Galati, is particularly concerned with the neighborhood gypsy children who have traditionally remained outside the mainstream of Italian education.

The grant money is being used exclusively for updating the curriculum through teacher education. Senor Galati remarked that one cannot force a way of teaching on a teacher. The type of program at Don Albera would not work at G. Cagliero. Instead, these teachers first identified areas of development (affective, cognitive, motor) and then together listed objectives, methods and means of

verification within each area. Each teacher then incorporated these ideas into her own curriculum.

The most striking feature of the classrooms at B. Cagliero was the original art being done by the children. Paintings decorated all of the walls and a beautiful painting of a green creature was displayed on an easel. Also, children were moving about in the classrooms, even playing on the floor, and more toys were in evidence. In one class the children performed for the visitors by singing an enthusiastic rendition of a song about animal sounds, somewhat similar to "Old MacDonald".

Later in the morning all of the children asembled in the corridor where a table had been set with cookies and snacks supplied by the parents for the guests. While the visitors sampled the refreshments the children sat on the floor along the wall. Some children danced spontaneously to music from a phonograph. It was not until the guests had finished eating that the children were served the remaining refreshments.

Each of these experimental programs was based on the team approach which included a supportive director and enthusiastic teachers. Both also reflected the influence of the municipal nursery schools in the city of Reggio nell'Emilia.

Municipal Nursery Schools in Reggio nell'Emilia

The city of Reggio nell'Emilia (population 130,000) is located on the fertile plain of the Po River in the northern Italian region of Emilia-Romana. It is an important agricultural center, manufacturer of electrical appartus, cement and pharmaceuticals and a

transportation link between Bologna to the east and Milan to the west. For many years the local government has been Communist.

Reggio nell'Emilia is also a city that spends 12% of its total municipal budget on early childhood programs (Gandini, November 11, 1988) and has become an international model in early childhood education. The program was launched soon after World War II and is based on the concept that Mantovani calls "gestione sociale" or social management.

> The leading idea is that the school is not a matter concerning only the parents, children, and teachers, but is the responsibility of all--an opportunity to broaden the limited perspective of family life, a chance for sharing responsibilities in running a public service and for actively learning about educational problems. Preschool is the first opportunity for the child and the family together to learn to cope with the social world: it is a social service for working mothers. It can also be the first chance for non-working women to become interested and involved in activities outside the family and for fathers to concern themselves with early childhood problems.
>
> As for the child, the main goal of the school is to foster socialization, that is: active involvement in and critical knowledge of the environment at large: school, family, town or village (Mantovani, 1978, pp.180-181).

In Reggio nell'Emilia, one basic premise of the early childhood program is that concrete experiences lead children to make new discoveries. Children construct knowledge by comparing what they already know; from this they create "new" knowledge which they

demonstrate in a variety of visual ways. The One Hundred Languages of Children is a travelling exhibition designed to show the many "languages" children have used to turn concrete experiences into symbolic expression. For example, a film shows a group of children on a field trip to the center of town to visit the lion statues which guard the market place. The children climb on the lions, explore them from all angles, make a paw print and sketch on-the-spot what they see. Later, back in the classroom, the teachers show slides of the trip, allowing the children to relive the experience visually. The children are then encouraged to recreate the lions through painting, collage, clay and/or wire sculpture. Finaly, the art is displayed in the classroom for all to enjoy (Rankin, 1988, p. 3).

There are many exciting variations on this theme. The success of the program depends upon teachers who are able to pay close attention to the children, giving support when needed but not providing solutions to problems.

> The physical space in the nursery schools is arranged with careful attention to details such as color of the walls, shape of the furniture, the arrangement of the simplest objects on shelves and tables. Light from the windows and doors shines through transparent collages and weavings made by the children. Healthy, green plants are everywhere. Behind the shelves displaying shells are mirrors which reflect the patterns which children and teachers have created (Gandini, 1984, p.18).

All of the twenty municipal nursery schools and twelve municipal infant centers in the city reflect this general notion of

aesthetics and color which are so typical of Italian culture. Each center employs its own art teacher in addition to the regular teaching and non-teaching staff. However, in additon, the city of Reggio nell'Emilia has added a tremendous community committment by assuming a collective responsibility for all of its children. The result is a total learning process for the children in which the school is an extension of the home and the community is an extension of the school.

Conclusions

Although private nursery schools have been operating in Italy for over one hundred and fifty years, the first State supported nursery schools were not opened until 1968, following the passage of the State Education Law #444. Today publicly supported preschool programs provide over 60% of early childhood care in Italy and the focus has changed from primarily custodial to primarily educational.

This remarkable shift in attitude over a period of 20 years is partly the result of the Federal government's committment to provide nursery education for children in Italy's poorer regions. In addition, affluent municipalities have experimented with innovative, non traditional nursery schools which combine a rich Italian cultural heritage with modern educational practices. Although the school program in Reggio nell'Emilia cannot be "packaged", some of its concepts have been incorporated into at least two State funded experimental programs in Rome. Even the name of the program at the Scuola Materna "Don Albera", Various Forms of Language for the Total Development of the Child suggests a connection to The One Hundred Languages of Children exhibit from Reggio nell'Emilia. At

Scuola Materna "G. Cagliero", the children were encouraged to recreate concrete experiences through the use of creative materials.

From the American point of view, the relatively poor educational preparation of teachers in early childhood, coupled with the absolute authority of the teacher in the classroom, remains a problem. Both of the experimental programs in Rome depended upon the continuing support of the teachers. Those teachers who did not care to participate continued with the traditional, highly structured, non-inventive curriculum.

The lack of toys, equipment and outside play area in most schools is obvious. At one large municipal nursery school about 75 children were observed playing outside on a small black-topped area. The total equipment consisted of one old ball and two small, plastic tricycles without pedals. The school had permission to use a completely enclosed private park across the street but the teachers were afraid to walk their classes of more than twenty small children across the dangerous city street. Even with the green light, the cars barely stopped at the intersection without hitting the children.

By American standards, the adult-child ratio of 1:20 is very high. But not all Italians agree that this is bad for the children. According to Tommaso Marradi (1978, p. 51-52) ratios of 4:1 up to 8:1 signify:

> a squandering of public money and a waste of human resources, which is all the more serious if one considers the fact that it is not at all true that the efficiency of education increases with a decrease in the number of pupils assigned to one teacher, but that, on the contrary, beyond a certain ratio,

with groups of teachers together with groups of pupils in the same place, the only thing that increases is confusion

The premise is that too many adults interfere with children's ability to generate and share activities with each other. In a study of nursery schools in Italy and the United States, William Corsaro explored the common features of young children's peer cultures and posed an interpretive perspective of differences (1988, p. 1-13). One curious difference was the ability of an Italian pair of children engaged in a "shared interactive experience" to protect their space from other children. In the crowded classroom, this was difficult, but outside, in a larger area, the children were able to maintain control of their space while allowing other children to enter, ask what was going on and perhaps play for a while. The American children were more apt to control their space by trying to direct the behavior of those entering it. Also, in a detailed analysis of videodata, Corsaro found "that Italian children displayed more abstract conversational skills and that they also engaged more frequently in argumentation of a highly complex nature than did the American children" (1988, p. 13).

Another surprising aspect of life in an Italian nursery school is the amount of physical contact between and among children. They hold hands, hug, push, shove and jostle whenever the teacher's attention is diverted. According to a study conducted by Hold-Cavell, Attili, and Schleidt, Italians belong to a "contact culture", where children display "reduced interpersonal distance, more eye contact and frequent touching" as opposed to Germans who live in a "non contact culture" where children exhibit "greater personal

distance, minimal eye contact and little touching" (1986, p.473). In their study the Italian children tended to play with particular partners and displayed less insecurity in school than the German children who played most frequently with different children.

These two studies conducted by American, German and Italian researchers suggest that, in spite of the many flaws in Italian early childhood education, the children may still be more verbal, more able to share and less insecure than some to their peers in more affluent countries. More cross-cultural studies are needed in these areas.

Finally, one cannot discuss early childhood education in a vacuum. In Italy, one is constantly reminded of the strength of the family. Divorce is legal but still unpopular. Usually the extended family is within walking distance, so that some caring person is available to pick children up from nursery school if the parents are unavailabe. Children are a precious resource in Italy. The government has a progressive policy for child care which provides nursery school education for small children that <u>supplements</u> the family rather than <u>substitutes</u> for it. The problem now is to implement it on more than an experimental basis.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PRIVATE DAY CARE CENTER IN CATALUNYA

In Spain the education of young children has always been vulnerable to political and social change. The efforts of the current Socialist government to present a united Federal educational plan has been hampered by intense regional claims to independence. The amount of emotional energy that ordinary citizens in Barcelona expend on the question of "Catalunyan" versus "Spanish" autonomy in education is a subject of mystery to an uninformed visitor. Although other Spaniards argue that this strong "national regionalism" of Catalunyans is being perpetuated by a small minority of highly educated and privileged people, nevertheless, the fact remains that these are the people setting public policy.

This chapter includes a short history of Catalunya with some emphasis on the degree of official acceptance of the Catalan language. This is followed by a section on the education of teachers and day care providers and government regulations concerning day care.

All of the observations were done at one private day care center in the village of Sant Cugat des Valles. Because of the nature of these experiences, the report is often personal and reflective. The study concludes with remarks and concerns based on readings, conversations and personal observations.

A History of Preschool Education in Catalunya

The geographical location of Spain on the Iberian penninsula has influenced the country's interactions with the rest of Europe and

northern Africa throughout history. In addition, the Pyrenees Mountains, which separate Spain from France, and the coastal ranges, which cut off the Mediterranean coastal areas from the central Meseta have created natural and historically autonomous regions such as Catalunya and the Basque Provinces with their own distinct culture and language.

Barcelona's position as a major port and trade center on the Mediterranean was established long before the formal unification of Spain in 1714.

> In the middle ages, Barcelona was a major seaport on the Mediterranean. With its own language and independent regional sources of revenue, Catalunya developed with its arms open to the rest of the world and, literally, its back turned to the rest of Spain (Fish, 1987, p.1).

However, upon the defeat of Catalunya by Philip V of Spain in 1714, most of the privileges of the once independent region were repressed, and the Catalan language was officially banned by the Castillian regime until 1898.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Spain gradually lost its place as a leading world empire. According to Mata i Garriga,

> The nineteenth century was one of marked political decline in Spain. The Napoleonic invasion, three civil wars, a brief dynastic change, a short republican period, the loss of the colonies, half-hearted industrialization and an even less healthy democratic life were paralleled by the establishment of an underequipped school system providing education of very poor quality (1985, p. 119).

The movement for Catalunyan nationalism took root in the beginning of the twentieth century. Politically, the Commonwealth of Catalunya (La Mancomunidad de Cataluña), which was constituted in 1914, the Basque Provinces, and Navarra all enjoyed a special status. In addition to the State schools, where instruction in Castillian was obligatory, the regions were allowed to provide schools in which instruction was in Basque or Catalan (Hoz, 1981-1982). At the same time, a campaign was begun to improve the schools. In 1901, the Spanish Ministry of Public Instruction provided State pay for public school teachers, in Catalunya a grass roots movement in which workers' unions joined forces with the business community worked to modernize education, and in 1914 Barcelona's first open-air school was established by Rosa Sensat. The first normal school in Barcelona, the Escola dels Mestres, operated from 1906-1910 and in four short years trained teachers who later became leading Catalan educators (Fish, 1987 and Mata i Garriga, 1985).

In 1908, the Barcelona city budget proposal included plans for the first public preschools (escoles maternals) for children aged three to six or seven years. "The proposal cited the need for improved hygiene for children and the need to offer a place away from home that creates a children's society for those whose mothers must be away from home as well " (Fish, 1987, p.3). Although the plan was vetoed, it became a guide for future development of city-supported schools in Barcelona (Fish, 1987).

In 1923 the Republican government of Spain collapsed, and King Alphonso XIII requested Primo de Rivera (a Catalan) to head the government which he then dictated from 1923 to 1930. During this

period regionalism, including formal recognition of languages other than Castillian, was suppressed. Educational reform movements went underground.

Spain enjoyed a brief period of democracy during the Second Republic, from 1931-1936. According to Mata i Garriga, "The first major programme of school building throughout Spain occurred during the republican period which also witnessed radical changes in educational objectives and teacher-training" (1985, p. 120). The new Constitution, approved on December 9, 1931, included the guarantee that primary education would be compulsory and free. The Catalunyan Autonomy Statute, approved on September 9, 1932, added that Catalan and Castillian should be "co-official languages in Catalonia; that the Generalitat (of Catalonia) might found and maintain educational institutions of its own" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1947 p. 141). For this brief period the educational standards in Catalunya, as in the rest of Spain, came up to European standards (Mata i Garriga, 1985).

However, the Civil War and almost forty years of the Franco military dictatorship cut short the innovative educational programs and, once again, the Catalan language was officially repressed. Catalunyan teachers were often sent to teach in other regions of Spain and replaced by Castillian speaking teachers. Quality education was available only to those who could attend private, usually Catholic, schools which were protected by the Franco regime (Schmidtke, 1986-87).

During the waning years of the dictatorship the Franco regime designed the Ley General de Educación (General Education Act) which

provided for "material and technical improvements" (Mata i Garriga, 1985, p.124), such as upgrading teacher preparation and giving the title of "professor" to teachers of elementary aged children, 4 to 14 years of age (Fish, 1987). It also established nursery schools for two and three year olds and kindergartens for four and five year olds as non-compulsory stages within the educational system. "However, not only were no new places created for children under six during those first years, but there was actually a decrease in places due to the baby boom of children entering primary school" (Palacios, 1988, p.3). However, the question of regional autonomy was not addressed until the new Constitution of December, 1978, which stated:

> Article 2: (The State) recognizes and guarantees the nationalities and regions constituting it the right to autonomy, as well as the solidarity of all.
>
> Article 3.1: Castillian is the official Spanish language of the State. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it.
>
> Article 3.2: The other Spanish languages will also officially exist in the autonomous areas in accordance with their statutes. (Schmidtke, 1986-87, p.26)

The transfer of powers from the State to the autonomous regions has not been easy. In 1980, Catalunya and the Basque Country were the first communities to complete the transfer of educational services. According to Garrido, this included "almost all of the responsibilities previously managed by the central Administration and all the human, material and financial resources then available, except those concerning the university level" (1983, p.164). In 1982

the State officially defined the legal ruling that established the compulsory fields of learning or subject matter and also defined the minimum number of hours to be allotted to each of them. The autonomous regions may add as many hours at they please to this core curriculum (Garrido, 1983).

The question of regional autonomy versus the Federal government has not yet been resolved. Many people fear that too much autonomy will lead to the "disintegration of Spain" (Garrido, 1983, p.166). However, the Catalunyan Nationalists continue to press for more and more separation from the Federal government. Education, particularly bilingual education, has become a political issue; in particular,

> Struggles for power to utilize or manipulate the educational institutions in the service of what might be high ideals of social or political reform, but which unfortunately on many occasions are transformed into plain and petty personal or group appetites (Hoz, 1981-82, p.7).

The policy of the present Socialist government is to strengthen this new autonomous structure, and at the same time balance the relationship between the central government and these autonomous governments of Catalunya and the Basque regions. Garrido states that:

> Most of the challenges the country is facing today (inflation, unemployment, social inequalities, relaxation of moral norms, juvenile delinquency, lack of competition in labour and industry, consumerism, the absence of ideals, poor preparation for democracy, political disillusionment, etc.) include a strong

educational ingredient. It will not be easy to contribute to a solution to these challenges from a completely new and boldly reorganized educational administration, especially one handicapped by the inertia of centuries. For this reason, the Spanish experiment during the years to come will be worthy of particular attention (1983, p.167).

Teacher Training

At the beginning of the twentieth century a primary school could be organized and taught by anyone who had the title of "Maestro" of Primary Education. A student could go from primary school directly to work or on to a higher level of educational or technical training. Admission to these secondary institutions was based on entrance examinations which, therefore, served as a measure of quality control of the primary schools (Hoz, 1981-82).

Until the Basic Education Law of 1970, training for the primary school title of Maestro consisted of a basic general education (Educación General Básico or EGB) from the ages of 6 so 13 plus three additional years of technical training from age 14 to 16. "The level of the courses provided for the teaching profession was so low that a person could qualify as a teacher at the age of sixteen and begin teaching at the age of eighteen" (Mata i Garriga, 1985, p. 120). However, in Catalunya and to some extent throughout Spain, teachers took it upon themselves to develop professionally. For example, during the period from 1950 to 1960 teachers from a few private schools in Catalunya met secretly to study and receive further training. In 1965 this developed into the clandestine Escola des Mestres Rosa Sensat (Rosa Sensat Teacher Training College) which

offered afternoon classes for young teachers. In 1966 the first post-war summer school, the Escola d'Estiu, was established and 150 teachers from eastern Spain met secretly under the protection of a convent (Mata i Garriga, 1985).

Since 1970 the Spanish National Law requires a teacher of children aged 4 to 14 to complete secondary school plus an additonal three years of teacher education at the university level. This higher level of preparation allows the teacher to use the title of "professor" rather than "maestro". According to Fish, the three year preschool teacher training at the Univertsidad Autónoma de Barcelona consists of one year of general teacher training plus two years of preschool specialization. This program, which includes observations and practicums in a variety of schools, lesson planning and practicum discussions, is considered to be a model program in Spain. The graduates of the program are credentialed to teach at all of the basic education levels but are specialized in preschool education (1987). This range of options is important because unemployment among preschool teachers is high.

For regular caregivers in infant and child care centers, no special diploma is required. Until very recently the development of day care programs has been in the private sector, outside of any legal framework. According to Palacios, during the 1970s, "Except for a routine license to open the establishment, there were no requirements for anyone who wanted to set up a centre for children under compulsory school age: no special qualifications were required, there was no limit on the proportion of adults to children and no educational programme or curriculum to act as a guideline" (1988,

p.4). Today, although there are significant regional differences, the situation remains legally the same.

El Guardería: Llar d'Infants Partufet

For this study, visits were concentrated on one private day care center, or "guardería, in Sant Cugat. Sant Cugat del Valles is a village of 25,000 people located twelve kilometers northwest of Barcelona, the capital of the region of Catalunya. The narrow streets, small shops and apartment houses are all crowded together in the central part of the city, while the more expensive condominiums and villas form a ring around the center. A thirteenth century monastery and a fifteenth century abbey church attest to the age of the city. The metro rail service south to Barcelona and north to the Universidad Autónoma is fast, efficient, and inexpensive. Friends say that the village has changed--too much building, too many cars on the narrow streets, too many commuters. In short, life is not as tranquil anymore. Many professional couples with small children have moved into Sant Cugat looking for better air and better schools for their children.

In Sant Cugat there is just one municipal day care center which accepts only 40-50 children. Private arrangements must be made for the vast majority of preschool children in the city. However, Sant Cugat does not appear to be typical of Catalunya. According to the Department of Education (Department d'Ensenyament), 191,380 children attended preschool programs in Catalunya in 1985. Of these, 52% were in publically supported programs, up from 27% in 1975 (Department d'ensenyament, 1984-85).

Many of the details of activities and discussions from visits to

this center were subjective impressions. However, each visit brought more insight into a new cultural experience. Because this gradual development of an appreciation of the system in Catalùnya illustrates a process of understanding, many exerpts from my personal journal are included.

Partufet Most guarderías do not encourage visitors, even parents. However, friends had just enrolled their two year old daughter, María, in Partufet and the director, Adelaide Balbuena, and María's teacher, Mariabelle, were willing to allow a foreign visitor to observe on a regular basis. On the morning of the first visit, Mariabelle explained that the year had just begun; many of the children were new and not yet adjusted to the school. María was crying hard when she saw her father, but she was only one among many apparently unhappy children.

The guardería used the ground floor rooms of an apartment building for the older children and another building for infants and young children. The babies, aged three months to about age two, were upstairs, but occasionally they used the outside play area which separated the buildings.

The first impression was amazement at the number of children in a small space. There was a class of "young twos" and another of "older twos", each with an enrollment of 28 children, one teacher and one aide. The two classes of threes and fours had between 30 and 34 children each, also with one teacher and one aide. The preschool class for five-year olds consisted of 26 children and one teacher. All of the teachers were young and incredibly calm.

At 11:30 the younger children were in transition from outside

to inside. The yard was shaded with many small trees and the dirt was covered with small, gray stones. María was crying so I held her for a moment and then I tried to comfort a little English boy who had been pushed off the slide and had an oozing bump on his forehead. He kept going to the fence, crying, "Mama, Mama!". But soon all of the two year olds had been taken inside, leaving the yard to about eighty three, four and five year olds. At the slide I helped the children line up and take turns. The teachers were either talking to each other or taking individual children to the bathroom. Many children were playing with stones--shoveling them or sometimes throwing them. The teachers seemed to pay no attention. The yard was extremely crowded and much of the behavior seemed aimless (D. Curtis, personal journal, September 26, 1986).

At 12:30 the drinking fountain came on, and one teacher washed the faces and hands of some of the children with the water from the fountain. The children divided into classes and walked into their respective rooms. The ones going home took off their smocks, got their backpacks from the cupboard and sat on the floor leaning against the wall. About half the children stayed for lunch. They took their bibs from their packs and sat at the tables. Parents started coming for their children and food was brought in to the others. In the two year old room María was still crying.

Maríabelle's Room

Only a few children were in the room being toileted at 3:30 P.M. the next day because some were still asleep and others were still at

home. The afternoon group eventually totaled about 15 children. Maríabelle and her aide, who was in and out, spent most of the next one-and-a-half hours changing diapers and pottying children. No toys had been taken off the shelves.

> María wanted to sit in my lap. Another child came to us and we dug play dough out of a toy. Maríabelle produced more play dough and gave one small piece to each child seated at a table. María left my lap so I held Javier who was crying, "Papa, Papa!" We played with little toys while the other children played in a random way--some on a small slide and others with little cars and trucks. It was extremely hot in the room; the children seemed to be thirsty and there was much fussing (D. Curtis, personal journal, October 23, 1986).

At 4:15 Maríabelle served chocolate milk and crackers to the children. At 4:45 the aide sat down with a wet cloth, some hair lotion, and a brush. She wiped each child's face, sprayed his hair with the lotion, and then brushed it. By this time María had struggled to get her backpack on and stood by the door waiting for her father. Finally most of the children sat on the floor against the wall while Maríabelle read a story and sang. They quieted down and looked happy when the parents started to arrive.

On this morning of the second visit, the children were much calmer than the preceding week, and the room was not as hot. During this transition period between home, and school there was not much activity.

> Maríabelle held a cow puzzle piece while singing a song about a cow. When she finished, the children seemed to want more so

I took an animal puzzle off the high shelf where all toys were kept and sat on the floor. Then I tried to create a small "special time" with a few children by giving each one a puzzle piece and asking, "Who has the cow? Where does it go?", and so forth. It was only partially successful--some of the children didn't talk at all and some spoke only Catalan, the primary language in this part of Spain. Although some children caught on quickly, the whole concept of taking turns was new. In the meantime, Maríabelle placed other animal pieces on the floor so there were pieces for everyone. Children continued to arrive until there were about 24 in all (D. Curtis, personal journal, September 30, 1986).

At 10:00 the children, Maríabelle and her aide stood in a circle for songs and finger play sung in Catalan. This was followed by a story about the sun. After the story Maríabelle placed a long piece of brown paper on the floor and gave each child one piece of colored chalk. She demonstrated how to draw a sun, and then the children who wanted to participate drew their versions of the sun on the paper.

The transition time to outside play at 10:45 was difficult. Twenty four children has to be toileted or diapers changed. One little girl began to sob when she realized that we were going outside.

Mariabelle said that she always cried at this time, so I held her and told her that she could sit with me. She stopped briefly but began again as soon as we were in the play yard. I held her while sitting on the wall and gradually she stopped crying. Eventually she got off my lap and played with stones on the

ground (D. Curtis, personal journal, September 30, 1986).

The two classes of little children played in a small yard by themselves with three or four teachers, in and out, attending them. Most of the play was solitary with some parallel play. Pushing and other aggressive behavior were fairly common but not much attention was paid to it. María had settled down and played very independently all morning. At 12:00 the two year olds were ready to go inside for an hour of quiet play and preparation for lunch at 1:00.

La Clase Pre-escolar--The Preschool Class for Five Year Olds

At 12:00 all of the five year old children were seated, four or five to a table, with work books open to a page with pictures of fruit. The teacher was speaking in Catalan about types of fruit, their shapes and colors. The children were asked to point to the grape, the apple, and so forth and to mark an X on the lemon. The books were closed and returned to desk drawers and the class continued with a lesson on the letter "l". First they reviewed the letters "p", "t", and "m". (All of the letters are first learned in cursive writing.) The teacher wrote "la", "le","li", "lo", "lu" on the board and the children all repeated the sounds in unison. Then she wrote "lala", "lale", "lali", "lalo",and "lalu", which the children again repeated. Finally they were asked to think of words with the sound of 'l' in them. The class session ended with a song about a little house with a red roof, green door, and yellow chimney. The children were then dismissed by tables to go outside.

Once outside, the children played very hard. Much of it involved running, chasing and minor skirmishes, most of which probably

would not be allowed in the United States but was generally ignored by the teachers at Partufet. For example, two boys were tussling when one pushed the other down quite hard and ran off. The other boy got up, wiped himself off, and walked away. He didn't cry and no one paid any attention. The quiet children stayed in the background; one girl just walked around carrying a doll.

Louisa's Room

The room for the "older twos" was arranged with six small tables and a chair for each child. As in all of the classrooms at Partufet, the puzzles, toys and books were on high shelves out of the reach of the children. On the morning of the visit, 28 two-and-a-half year olds were seated at little tables just completing a workbook lesson. One page in the workbook showed a picture of a bear sitting in a puddle of water. The children were to put sticky circles in the water with the bear. Another picture was of three bears, each standing on two hind legs. The children were to put circles on the bears' feet, not hands.

Two days later the workbook activity was designed around the color red. Each child pasted a red piece of construction paper at the bottom of the page and painted red thumb prints on the top where the page was white. When asked what happened if the child printed on the red. Louisa, the assistant teacher, replied,"We tell them that it is already red. They should just paint where it is white."

Louisa spoke English well so I was able to extend our discussions beyond the limits of my Spanish. We talked about the development of two year olds, including allowing the child to make choices instead of simply following directions. Louisa

had lived for five years in Berkeley where she had volunteered as an aide in her daughter's nursery school. I asked her to compare systems. She said that in Berkeley the two year olds did whatever they wanted to. If they didn't want a story, they didn't listen. "Children this age like taking instructions and it prepares them for what lies ahead. I think that this way is better" (D. Curtis, personal journal, October 13, 1986).

When Louisa was questioned about the length of the schoolday for such young children, she answered that all English, American and German parents asked the same question.. The guarderia is open from 9 A.M. - 1 P.M. and from 3:30 P.M. - 5 P.M with a lunch time option. About half of the children in this group went home for lunch. Louisa felt that those who did not return did not seem to feel a part of the group. Many children stayed all day even if their mothers did not work. If a child did not eat well at home, the mother often had the child remain at school where he tended to eat better. Children who ate at school got no morning snack--only water if they were thirsty. Foreign parents usually began by sending a bottle of juice. However, no bottles were allowed. The children who stayed for lunch napped for one and a half hours. Louisa thought that staying the full day was all right but, if she were a non-working parent, she would probably bring her two year old home for lunch and nap.

Louisa also helped me to understand the guardería's approach to children in distress. One morning the little English boy, Philip, was crying. Louisa held him briefly and explained to me that he had been happy at the end of September but had just returned from England and it was like his first day again. I

offered to hold him and she said--no, they did not hold crying children for more than a moment. Babies, yes, but not two-and-a-half year olds. She then held Philip's hand and took him with her while she checked to see if I might visit the babies. When they returned, Philip was no longer crying but was holding tight to his teacher's hand. At that point I realized that my previous behavior at the guardería of holding and trying to comfort María, Philip, Javier and others was against the policy of the center. However, the center was staffed by kind and caring adults--I never heard an angry word--and the older children, at least, all appeared uninhibited in play and well behaved in class. With an adult-child ratio of 1 to 12, perhaps early training in independence and fortitude was more appropriate than attempting to give individual attention to each unhappy child (D. Curtis, personal journal, October 15, 1986).

The Director

The director of Partufet had a university degree in preschool education and was active in professional early childhood associations. She was proud of the program offered to the children in her guarderia. She said that the school offered many activities for the children, including special classes in swimming, rhythms, music and even English, all taught by specialists. The regular teachers were all well qualified to work with small children. For example, the preschool teacher had a degree in education from the university and was qualified to teach children from 4 to 14 years of age. Many of the parents were professional people with high standards. Women

who did not work usually sent their children to a guardería at least for half a day because, "In Sant Cugat there is enough money and women like to do other things. Also, they want their children to be with others for play and education "(A. Balbuena, personal communication, September 22, 1986).

She said that the government sets no rules concerning guarderías. Thus, there is no generally accepted adult/child ratio, teacher training program or regulations as to the physical plant. Since the government gives no help to those unable to pay, Partufet carried some families who could not afford the care. In 1986 the basic rate at Partufet was 10,500 pesetas per month (about $75.00) and included care from 9 A.M. - 1 P.M. and from 3:30 P.M. - 5 P.M. Additional costs included 9500 pesetas for meals and lunch time care and extra for the special lessons, so the minimum cost for full time care was about $150.00 per month. By Spanish standards, that was a lot of money.

On the last visit to Partufet, Adelaide and Louisa discussed some basic issues of day care. Adelaide had been at the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) conference in Israel the preceding July. People from other countries were amazed at the size of her classes. "But why?" she asked. "The children are happy and the school provides many activities-music, gym, opportunities to experience and sympathetic teachers. It is true that they lack sufficient space but the new addition (under construction) will provide more room with no increase in the number of children." For Adelaide the main purpose of the workbooks was for teaching the children to like learning, not to follow instructions. The children

enjoyed the total experience of sitting, following directions, and then successfully doing an activity, she said. It prepared them to enjoy learning in the future. The children were never forced to sit or punished for not doing so (A. Balbuena, personal communication, October 15, 1986). With this line of reasoning, Señora Balbuena interpreted the activity as fulfilling the fundamental needs of young children.

Conclusion

During 1985-86, only 5% of Spanish two year olds and 16% of three year olds attended any kind of preschool program. Of these young children, 83% went to private centers (Palacios, 1988). In Catalunya, 12% of the total number of children enrolled in preschool programs in 1984-85 were two and three years old (Department d'ensenyament, 1984-1985). However, "Things are very different in the case of four and five year olds: 85% of four year olds and 97% of five year olds (in Spain) attend pre-primary centers. In these two age groups, 87% go to public centers (Palacios, 1988). This was a tremendous change in the ten years since the end of the military dictatorship. In 1975-76, 62% of the two to six year olds attending pre-primary education centers (betwen 25% and 30% of the population of that age group) were in private centers (Palacios, 1988).

The present Socialist government has drawn up a plan for educational reform which includes the upgrading of the quality of preschool education and raising the school leaving age from age 14 to age 16. One factor in planning demographic changes is the birthrate in Spain which has dropped by approximately 100,000 children per

age group betwen 1981 and 1986 (Palacios, 1988). For example, in 1979-80, there were 402,965 children in Catalunya between the ages of two and five; in 1984-85, the number had dropped to 285,217 (Department d'ensenyament, 1984-1985). As the children enter elementary school, one could expect that more financial resources would be available for preschool education. However, according to Palacios, fulfilling the requirements of the new law may force the limited resources of the government to be assigned to implementing compulsory schooling in the 14 - 16 year old range rather than on non-compulsory preschool education. In addition, neither the present system nor the proposed restructuring of the educational system includes programs for family education and help for the non-working mother (1988).

The guardería "Partufet" has been presented as one example of a large, private day care center in Catalunya. From an American point of view, the adult/child ratio was too large. The children's outside play included almost constant running about, frequent physical contact and little teacher interference. Yet Catalunyan friends felt that their system was better than that in the United States where "the children are overprotected". No one seemed concerned about the lack of individual attention or the large classes.

Perhaps the question should not be how Partufet compared with a similar institution in California but how well it served the community of Sant Cugat. In Sant Cugat most mothers of small children either did not work at all or worked only part time. However, apartments were generally small and public parks were virtually nonexistant. By tradition schools are formal places and

homes are informal. Parents are expected to give their children the individual attention they need because, in school, the child who succeeds is the one who can sit and follow directions when he begins the first grade at age six. Twenty percent of the Spanish working population is unemployed and, as is true everywhere, the unemployed are generally the uneducated.

By offering a program for young children which prepared them for future success in school, Partufet was providing a service to parents. Although the children did not get much individual attention and choices of activities were limited, the curriculum itself was based on solid pedagogical principles. In addition, if the government plan to regulate the class adult/child ratio to 1/10 becomes law, one could expect less regimentation of the children in the classroom. The teachers at the day care center did not question, as I did, whether or not an educational system which rewards unquestioned obedience to authority is compatible with a democratic form of government.

CHAPTER SIX

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

The development of early childhood programs in Australia has followed closely behind that in the United States. Australian journals, books and popular literature reflect American and British educational trends and current thought. But because so much is familiar, the differences in the American and Australian systems take on a special significance. Both countries were settled by immigrants and have unresolved problems concerning indigenous populations; both countries are "English speaking" but have increasing numbers of non-English-speaking residents; the Australian system of government is modeled after the English parlimentarian and the American democratic forms of government. But, instead of dealing with a population of 250 million people living in 50 states, Australia has a population of 16.5 million people living in just six states and two territories. The Commonwealth government's relationship to the Australian states is not identical to the American Federal government and its states. In order to understand government subsidized child care services, it is necessary to learn about government funding and the politics which determine budgetary policies.

Throughout Australia, sessional pre-school programs and day care services have developed separately. This lack of a united front for all child care services has complicated funding. This chapter identifies available services, explains their funding bases, and gives

anecdotal examples drawn from personal experience or current literature. In addition, it provides an overview of early childhood services, including the playgroup movement, regular State-supported child care programs, innovative and community based programs, and private day care centers. These topics have been covered in depth in previous chapters but within the context of English, Danish, Italian, and Catalunyan programs. Also included are two areas of early childhood unique to Australia--correspondence schools and aboriginal services.

Costs are quoted in Australian dollars. In January, 1989 the exchange rate with American dollars averaged A$1.00=US$0.85.

Background

It is important to have some understanding of the geographical features and the political climate of Australia in order to understand the uniqueness of its educational challenges.

Australia is about the size of the continental United States with a total population of 16.5 million people. It is the world's most arid continent. Fifty percent of the country receives less than twelve inches of rain a year. The green, fertile, coastal belt is confined to the north, east, southeast, and another small area in southwestern Australia. Since the northern third of the country lies within the tropic zone, the wet, coastal areas of the Northern Territory and Queensland are tropical rain forests. Although the population density of the country is only two people per square kilometer, 85% of the people live in an urban area. However, the other 15% are scattered over an enormous area and the education of the isolated student is an important component of the educational system. For

example, the School of the Air in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, has an enrollment of 140 students aged 4-12 living in an area the size of France and West Germany combined. Such isolation is difficult to comprehend.

The country is divided into six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) and two territories (Northern Territory and the Australian Capitol Territory, called the ACT). The Map and Table in Appendix B illustrate the vast differences in size and population. The education of school-aged children is the responsibility of each state, but territorial schools (the Northern Territory and the ACT) are administered by a combination of the Commonwealth Schools Authority and local school boards. Funding for schools comes primarily in the form of block grants from the Commonwealth. However, once basic requirements for the use of Federal money have been met, each state acts quite independently. For example, in the ACT (Canberra) a child may enter school during the month he turns five if it occurs during the first term (February to May). After that, entrance is delayed until the following year[1]. The child enters kindergarten and continues through ten additional grades with an option to continue in a two year "college", which is a specialized academic eleventh and twelfth grade. In Queensland a child enters first grade at age five and graduates twelve years later. But in

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[1] School entrance dates in Watson, a community in the greater Canberra area. In the ACT each primary school is run by a local school board, so entrance dates may vary from one primary school to another.

Western Australia he must turn six during the year in which he begins school. All qualified high school graduates are supposed to be prepared for post-secondary education in any state; in actual fact, there seems to be little interchange of students at the undergraduate level.

Pre-school And Child Care Staff

In Australia a preschool program is the equivalent to an American pre-kindergarten program; that is, a sessional, part-time program offered at or adjacent to an elementary school to children during the year prior to regular school entrance. In the ACT the Department of Education administers the preschools which are available to every four-year-old in the Territory. Teachers are paid according to their position on the regular teacher salary schedule.

People who work in child care centers are called "child care workers". Traditionally, child care workers have not been unionized, but they have been paid wages determined by a national "award" system; that is, a rate set by the unions for a particular job category. The Miscellaneous Workers Union is now seeking to organize the child care workers in the ACT and Northern Territory, redefine the job classification, and create a career structure for child care workers.

In 1989, child care workers salaries were:

Table 2.
Salaries of Australian Child Care Workers, 1989

Title	Status	Salary	Benefits
Preschool teacher	Permanent	$23,000 to $29,000 per year	10 weeks holiday, all benefits
Child care worker (CCC)	Permanent full-time	$15,000 per year	4 weeks' holiday, all benefits
Child care worker (CCC)	Permanent part-time	$7.87 per hour	All benefits
Untrained child care worker	Full-time	$13,360 per year	All benefits
Untrained child care worker	Part-time (less than 24 hours) per week	$6.91 per hour, plus 25% of base pay	No benefits
Caregiver, 15 to 17 years old	Full-time	$6,830 per year	All benefits
Caregiver, 15 to 17 years old	Part-time	$3.46 per hour, plus 25% of base pay	No benefits

The union is proposing a seven level classification of child care workers from junior trainee to a director with four years of post secondary education (Anderson, G. personal communication, January 17, 1989).

Permanent child care workers now are required to have a two year associate diploma from an Institute of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). Preschool teachers need a three-year diploma from a College of Advanced Education (CAE). Twenty-one teacher education institutions in Australia have early childhood programs. The initial expansion of early childhood services in the 1970s resulted in a parallel expansion of teacher preparation programs.

However, a shrinking school population and tightening economic conditions have forced staff and program cutbacks.

Preschools

The preschool movement in Australia began one hundred years ago in New South Wales. However, there was little public support until 1972, when the Labour Government committed itself to providing free preschool education to all Australian children during the year prior to primary school entrance. In 1974 categorical preschool subsidies were introduced by the Commonwealth. These subsidies continued until 1977 when the recently elected Liberal government declared preschool education a state responsibility and included funding for it in State block education grants. In 1988, the Labour government discontinued all Commonwealth support for preschools and declared it a State responsibility. (Speldewinde, K. personal communication January 18, 1989) The funded preschools are administered by each state's Department of Education and are 'sessional'; i.e., they operate during regular school terms. Over 75% of eligible children now attend sessional preschools, usually four times per week. In the ACT 90% of four- year-olds attend government pre-school.

The operation of the preschools in the ACT differs from operations in other states and the Northern Territory but it will be used here as an example of the program. The ACT Schools Authority's preschool division employs five district preschool principals, each of whom administers about fifteen preschools. Hiring of teachers is done through the Schools Authority but the local principal is on the selection committee. Because the ACT is not a

state, primary funding comes from the Commonwealth which pays salaries, rent, insurance and capital expenses. In 1988 a $6.00 per week parent fee was imposed by the Government on all preschools in Canberra. This is on top of voluntary fees of about $25.00 per semester set by parent committees to cover costs of cleaning and supplies. There has been a huge uproar over the imposed fee and some parents have withdrawn their children from the program. (Cahir, P. personal communication, January 17, 1989) On January 17, 1989, the local branch of the Australian Labour Party promised to abolish the $6 per week fee for the preschools in the Canberra area (Canberra Times, 1989, January 17, p.1),

Watson Preschool. The Watson Preschool is typical of schools in the Canberra area. The building itself is basically one large room with an enclosed, outside play area in an attractive neighborhood across the street from a playing field and close to the primary school. On the day of the visit, twenty-two children, including six from a commercial day care center, were attending the three-hour program. Except for one Asian child, all of the children were white. The teacher was assisted by an experienced aide and a "rostered" mother. At this particular preschool, mothers served as assistants about three times per term. The activities were what one would expect in a well-run American nursery school--songs, cognitive exercises, crafts, a "special project", outside free play, etc. Pressure for early reading did not seem to be a problem. One child was reading but many could not print their names. Oral language, decision-making and problem-solving were stressed. The teacher displayed a clear concept of learning theory and expertise in implementing it.

Each preschool teacher sets her own program. The first term is always unsettled because of continuous enrollment, but at the end of the first term only children with special needs are admitted. The normal progression is for a child to enter kindergarten after one full year in preschool although a young or immature child may repeat the kindergarten year. More and more parents are choosing to keep their children in preschool beyond the one year period; for example, a child turning five in March and eligible for kindergarten in April may remain in preschool until the folowing February. However, that child could be denied a place in preschool if a younger, eligible child needed it. Since over-enrollment is not an immediate problem in the ACT., this allocation of spaces has apparently not been tested, although it remains a regulation in the system.

Correspondence Preschools. With the exception of the ACT and Victoria, all of the states and Northern Territory have a highly developed correspondence school for isolated students and most, if not all, include a preschool component. The Alice Springs School of the Air provides correspondence courses, daily radio lessons, and teacher visits to pupil homes at least once a year. In additon, the school supplies the materials, including library books, a two-way radio, a television set, a VHS video recorder, and a cassette player/recorder (School of the Air. 1986).

The Queensland Department of Education offers a homebased early childhood program for four-and five-year old children and their families living in geographically isolated areas. The parent keeps in contact with the child's teacher through an exchange of letters and audio cassette tapes. The materials supplied include

story books, suggested ideas of activities and audio cassettes of songs, body movement, games, etc. In addition, each child receives a Commonwealth Department of Education allowance of $120.00 per year to assist in the purchase of educational materials (Preschool by Correspondence, 1985).

Western Australian Preschools. According to the Western Australia Director General of Education, Dr. R. L. Vickers, there is no national collection of preschool and child care statistics. However, in Western Australia a total of approximately 21,000 children turning five and older during the year 1985 were enrolled in early childhood programs. (Primary school entrance at age six.) By extrapolating from population statistics, this would appear to include over 90% of five-year-olds. The W. A. Labour Government has also committed itself to providing public pre-school for all four-year-olds but noted that the extent of the provision will depend upon educational priorities as determined by the Budget (1985).

Child Care Centers

The Lady Gowrie Centres The Lady Gowrie Centres have the longest history of continual Commonwealth support for early childhood education in Australia. They were the outgrowth of the Depression when the Department of Health became increasingly concerned about the health and nutrition of young children. In 1937 the government provided £100,000 to be used "in respect of health projects, especially in relation to the health of women and children" (Department of Health, 1944). After consulting with concerned organizations, particularly the Kindergarten Associations of all states, the Prime Minister wrote to the State Governments in April, 1938,

> Accordingly it has been decided that a Demonstration Centre should be established in each capital city at which not only will the methods for the care and instruction of young children be tested and demonstrated, but also problems of physical growth, nutrition and development will be studied. These Centres will be under the direction of the Commonwealth Department of Health...the cooperation of existing Kindergarten Associations will be sought (Department of Health, 1944 p. na.).

In fact, the Kindergarten Association was asked to establish and administer the Lady Gowrie Centres (named after Lady Gowrie, a strong supporter of child welfare and the wife of the Governor General at the time) and has continued to do so, now under the organizational title of the Australian Early Childhood Association (AECA).

Today the Lady Gowrie Centres are the pride of the early childhood community. They have continued to serve as resource and advisory centers for agencies concerned with provision and planning for the education and welfare of children ages 0 - 6. They provide pre-service and in-service workshops for teachers, serve as neighborhood centers and/or child care centers and are constantly seeking better ways to serve the community.

The Lady Gowrie Centre in Perth, W. A. should serve as an example of the variety of activities available at one of these "demonstration centres". The center, located in the working class suburb of Karawara, is licensed for fifty-six day care places and ten occasional care places. The three separate buildings surrounded by play areas service a variety of programs. The largest building

provides for two classes of full day care for children between the ages of two and six and a separate room for infants to age two. The center has instituted vertical grouping so the actual number of children fluctuates by the hour. On this morning, the five-year-olds were all at a pre-school across the street and some of the four year olds were attending the pre-preprimary class in the second building. Each class had one preschool teacher, or a nurse for the babies, and one aide.

The second building provides one large room for a pre-preprimary class, called kindergarten but similar to an American nursery school, for four-year-olds. The class is offered five times per week to approximately twenty neighborhood children and is taught by a preschool teacher and aide. The second room is used for "occasional care" children. To be eligible for occasional care in Western Australia, the child has to be no more than five years old and the mother cannot be working on a permanent basis. It is "respite care".

The third building houses the office and the neighborhood center rooms, one of which was being used to teach English to six or seven Chilean refugees and the other for the care of their children. At other times these rooms are used by playgroups, a weekly child health clinic, toy library, aerobics classes, parenting programs, or whatever the community requests. The director felt that the employment of a coordinator had been a key factor in the successful development of the Neighborhood Centre (MacPherson, L. personal communication, May 14, 1986).

The concept of vertical grouping is only one of the Perth Lady

Gowrie Centre's recent innovations. For example, in 1986 the Casual Ethnic Worker's Pool (CEWP) was a pilot project run jointly by the Centre and the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre. They had established a pool of ethnic workers to work in children's services on a casual basis. These people, representing many nationalities, acted as facilitators for migrant families and as resource persons for the day care teachers. Another Centre project was an outreach program to subsidized child care in rural or isolated areas of Western Australia. The Resource Development Project Officer visited day care centers throughout the State as a consultant, offering in-service classes for the teachers and providing them an opportunity to visit centers in metropolitan areas.

Each of the seven regional centers is intended to meet local community needs. However, all are committed to the same goals:

1) providing direct services to children and parents
2) acting as resource and advisory centres for early childhood centers
3) providing a setting for and, where possible, initiating research related to young children
4) initiating and demonstrating innovative programs for children
5) linking with other agencies and, where possible, helping to meet community needs as perceived by them (Dixon, 1986, pp.17-18).

The Perth Lady Gowrie Centre exemplifies that committment.

Government subsidized day care centers The Child Care Act of 1972 paved the way for Commonwealth subsidized child care. The

Act provided funding for capital expenditures such as building and remodeling and operational expenses including 75% of primary staff salaries for government-subsidized day care centers. The effect of the high level of salary subsidy encouraged centers to hire highly qualified personnel. However, the subsidy became very expensive for the government, averaging about $30.00 per week per child for full-time care and with little control over future costs.

Under pressure to reduce the budget, the government passed the Child Care Amendment of November, 1985 and the Commonwealth no longer subsidizes salaries. Instead, it now pays a child subsidy directly to the center. In 1989 this amounted to $12.20 per week per child aged three and over and $18.20 per week for each child two years old and younger for full-time care. There is some variation according to the number of hours the center is open. In addition, families are subsidized on an individual basis through a sliding scale fee structure determined by parent income. Minimum fees have been raised from $10.00 per week to $13.50 and maximum fees now average around $90.00 per week, up from $40.00 or $50.00 before the new system. The government hoped to save ten million dollars and provide 20,000 new full-time, part-time and occasional-care places by 1988. In fact, 26,000 new places were made available during the three-year period (1985-88), with 50% going to after school care (Cahir, P. personal communication, January 17, 1989). In 1989, 9 1/2% of eligible children are using some kind of government subsidized pre-school care, up from the 7 1/2% in 1986.

The Commonwealth Government has issued guidelines for

priority of access to subsidized day care. They are, in order of priority:

1) Children with working parent(s) or parent(s) preparing for the workforce
2) Children with disabilities
3) Children at risk
4) Parents at home needing respite or occasional care.

Special consideration is given to children of Aboriginal, ethnic, isolated, low-income, and single-parent families (Dixon, 1986).

The following centers ranged from the small Campus Child Care Collective to the large multi-purpose neighborhood centers. Three quite different centers will serve as examples of the variety of services available in the government subsidized sector.

The Black Mountain Community Creche. The Black Mountain Community Creche is non-profit and parent-run. It was organized by parents who wanted a day care center close to the city center and workplace. The center opened in a Boy Scout Hall in 1980 as a fully self-supporting concern but in 1984 it received concurrent funding from the Department of Community Services. The location limited the enrollment to 27 children aged 16 months to five years. The parent committee had applied for government funds to build a larger center, but was repeatedly unsuccessful as money for new centers was going to the outlying suburbs. Eventually the Department of Community Services built a new day care center building even nearer to the city center which it leased to the Black Mountain Creche.. In March, 1988, they moved to the new location in Braddon and increased their enrollment to 42 children between the ages of 0

and 5 years.

The staff now consists of the teacher-director, one nurse, two certificated child care workers, a credentialed pre-school teacher and three assistants. In 1989, the cost of care was $95.00 per week for babies and $90.00 for children no longer in "nappies". The new location is close to low-cost housing and a number of families have fee relief. The center is run "family style" with the children separating occasionally for age-related activities. The four-year-olds are encouraged to attend pre-school but many parents prefer the program at the creche. The vertical grouping allows siblings to play together or the older children to help the younger ones. This combination of concerned parents, qualified staff, and Government and community support (the capital outlay by the Department of Community Services) has resulted in a viable, quality day care center.

The ANU Preschool and Child Care Centre. The largest of the five child care organizations at Australian National University (ANU) is the Preschool and Child Care Centre. It is housed just off campus in some old buildings with ample rooms and outside play area for 85 children. They are divided into seven age groups (wombats, kangaroos, koalas, etc.) from infants to five years. The fees are now $92.50 per week for children in nappies and $86.50 per week for those not in nappies.. However, many of the parents are students and eligible for fee relief from the Australian government. The center employs a full-time director, two pre-school teachers, three nurses, eight certificated child care workers and experienced assistants. It also serves as a "practicum" location for students from

local colleges. The center is administered by a committee of parents, but the director is in charge of daily operations. Children can be enrolled for full-time or part-time care with preference given to the children of ANU students and staff. It is clearly a big operation, providing high-quality care for many families with different needs--students, part-time working parents, single parents and full-time working parents.

Parents-On-Campus Child Care Centre. One alternative to the ANU Child Care Centre for permanent part time care is the Parents-On-Campus Child Care Centre. In 1986 this was a true cooperative, requiring one parent per family to work one half day per week. But after new child care regulations in 1987, the center was asked to be fully staffed. According to the director, the parents report feeling that the quality of care has improved since the change. However, members are still required to participate in one maintenance work party each vacation and cleaning work parties twice a year. Fees in 1989 were $8.50 per half day session with concessional rates for those on minimal allowances. The center is licensed for 42 children betwen the ages of 0 and 6 years and has a long waiting list. This combination of committed parents, enthusiastic teachers and some Government and University subsidies allowed the cooperative to offer convenient, high-quality, part-time care at minimum cost.

Obviously not all of the day care centers in Australia are of equally high quality. Canberra is a government city with a disproportionate number of well-educated, middle- or high-income families, few minorities and little poverty. The other states have their own particular population, financial and educational

considerations. States may supplement day care centers above the Commonwealth subsidies in whatever way they choose. The ACT receives some extra money for funding neighborhood centers from the Department of Community Services and from the Commonwealth Games and Lottery income. New South Wales pays 20% of primary staff salaries of subsidized centers. Northern Territory pays a 20% staff salary subsidy on all day care centers, government or commercial. In Victoria, assistance is given for services such as administration and rent, but not for salaries. South Australia has been the first state to integrate its preschool programs and day care services under a central director. Indications are that it is providing a more efficient administrative structure for early childhood services (Cahir, P. personal communication, January 17, 1989),

Occasional Care Center. "At any given time, slightly more than one third of the mothers of pre-schoolers are at work in Australia" (Dixon, 1986, p.1). However, the two-thirds at home often find it difficult to get away from their children for even short periods. "Motherhood is smothering me," is a common complaint. There are very few American-type nursery schools for two- and three-year olds and almost none receiving government support. The concept of occasional care is an attempt to provide temporary or respite care for children whose mothers are at home. The centers are usually an adjunct to a day care or community center with similar staffing regulations and pay schemes. The parents pay around $2.00 per hour with concessional rates for low-income families. Sometimes a mother will earn time by working at the center. It is common for a child to be signed up on a regular basis, but the make-up of the

group varies by the hour. Although they are basically play centers, they all offer typical nursery school activities. Canberra has just 12 occasional-care centers. Many women in the early childhood field feel that respite care is one of society's best protections against child abuse and that much more is needed in this area.

Family Day Care Schemes

Family day care in Australia is administered in the form of "schemes" and funded by the Commonwealth Government. One scheme might consist of a coordinator, three or four field assistants, the family caregivers and the children. The fieldworker's job is to match the families desiring care and the caregivers. She also supervises the caregivers and arranges play groups for them, although the coordinator is ultimately responsible for maintaining quality care. The field assistants act as resource and support personnel and may provide classes in child development for the caregivers. The number of children in any one home is set according to age; for example, for infants the limit is four, inclulding the caregiver's own children. The ACT has 11 Government subsidized family day care schemes (as well as private agencies) serving approximately 2,200 children on a part- or full-time basis. Alice Springs (population, 22,000) has two schemes serving a total of 250 children--almost twice as many as are in all of the day care centers, non-profit and commercial. Parents pay between $60.00 and $70.00 per week with fee concessions for low income families.

I talked with one caregiver in Canberra who was able to care for three children full-time and one child before and after school in addition to her own two school-age children without violating

licensing regulations. One morning a week she attended a special playgroup for day care mothers where the specialized playgroup leader planned the activities and the mothers carried them out. In addition, the field assistants were always available for help in areas of child development, and the staff provided a positive support system for her when problems arose.

In addition to the Federally funded Family Day Care Association, two private schemes in the ACT offer a referral service for parents and caregivers, and an undetermined number of independent caregivers operate legally as long as the adult/child ratio is within regulations. One of the problems facing the FDC schemes is the increasing preference of families for on-site day care centers. However, in a 1988 survey of parents using family day care, 74% preferred it over anything else and 96% preferred it to "private minding". (Gifford, p.28) Among the recommendations of the 1988 report on FDC schemes in the ACT were: Upgrading career training, encouraging career-run playgroups, developing effective contact with parents, and promoting a more positive image for the Family Day Care Association (Gifford, pp. 50-51).

Neighborhood and Community Centers

Like the Lady Gowrie Centres, the neighborhood centers are models of community involvement and reflect the needs of the local community. Their primary concern is to act as a family support system and, as such, they offer a variety of services under one umbrella organization. Their size and complexity vary, depending upon the financial support of the community and the needs of the neighborhood.

Tuggeranong Community Services. The community of Tuggeranong is a growing suburb southwest of Canberra's Civic Centre. It is sometimes called "Nappy Valley", a name reflecting the influx of young families. Tuggeranong Community Services, Inc. (T.C.S.) is a large-scale operation providing services to the people who live and work in the valley. It administers three separate neighborhood centers and employs a staff of 85 people. T.C.S. is a non-profit, government funded organization whose governing board is a management committee made up of community people, parents and staff. The director is an ex-officio member of the board. The committee determines the types of programs to be offered and confirms the appointments of middle-and high-level personnel. The money is funded primarily from the Department of Community Services supplemented with Commonwealth Games and Lottery income. T.C.S. currently services three family day care schemes, one full-day care center, after-school care and school holiday programs, three occasional-care centers, a "Special Needs" program and a community work program involving over 80 trained volunteers.

The Richardson Family Centre is one of the three neighborhood centers administered by the T.C.S. The center itself consists of a large "occasional-care" room with enclosed yard, a kitchen, a small meeting room and one large office shared by the Family Day Care Coordinator, three Field Assistants, the Special Needs Coordinator and the Community Work Coordinator. This group of teachers, nurses, counselors and community services representatives all share a common interest in family support. Thus, for example, if a teacher in the Occasional Care unit identifies a family in stress, she has

immediate access to the Special Needs Coordinator who can then arrange to visit the family. After identifying the needs of the family, she can call upon the other in-house services for support.

In Tuggeranong the Management Committee had indicated an interest in providing help for parents. This allowed the director to hire the Special Needs Coordinator who developed her own parent support program. The Two's Club was designed for parents and "normal" two year olds. The children spend the morning in the Occasional Care unit while the parents are involved in discussion, workshops or programs with invited speakers. The same coordinator runs a Special Needs program for women whose pre-schoolers are displaying "unacceptable" behavior and a Sleep Program for parents whose children wake during the night.

The Braitling Neighborhood Centre. The Braitling Neighborhood Centre in Alice Springs, Northern Territory, is a remodeled house in a blue collar neighborhood. The comfortable living room is furnished with couches and easy chairs donated by the United States Satellite Tracking Station. The yard is large and shady with ample access to water play in this hot and dusty climate. In 1986 the center was licensed to care for 32 children at any one time. Fourteen children were full-time and the other spaces were filled with permanent part-time or occasional-care children. It is an informal center with vertical grouping of children, well-suited to the needs of a small community with a high percentage of young families.

In addition to providing day care, the center has a neighborhood room which is available for playgroups, baby and immunization clinics, and other community functions. Also, in 1986, the Centre

received a $100,000, twelve-month Commonwealth Grant to develop a mobile program to reach isolated families in the outback. They planned to send a mobile unit consisting of a pre-school teacher and other community workers for a week at a time to one central location such as a cattle station or trading center. This Grant was a direct result of the energy and committment of the Centre's director and board.

The Hyde Park Family Centre The Hyde Park Family Centre in downtown Sydney has a sign on the door advertising its facilities: day care, mother's feeding room, toilets, shower, dressing room, iron, lounge area, writing desk and public phones. The director described the children's program as strictly occasional-care for a maximum of 30 children. Reservations are required in advance to insure a place but a "special needs" child is always accomodated. In 1986, the cost was $1.00 for the first two hours and $1.00 for each hour after. The location in Hyde Park is not only convenient to the city center but extremely pleasant. This particular center also serves older women in need of temporary rest or sanctuary. It has been funded by the Sydney City Council for over 30 years.

Other neighborhood centers offer different programs. Services are not limited to low-income areas; any community can apply for government funding from a variety of sources. The ability to meet the changing needs of a community with a minimum amount of government interference, yet some financial support, seems to be a key to their success.

Private Day Care

In the ACT there are eleven privately owned, "for-profit" day

care centers and four YMCA or YWCA non-profit, non-subsidized centers. Since they are usually licensed to care for a large number of children, they are able to serve as many families as the subsidized centers. Throughout Australia, child care workers in the public sector expressed concern about the quality of care in the private centers. For example, ACT licensing regulations now require a nurse for every 15 children less than eighteen months old within the ratio of one adult for every five infants. The regulations also permit employing child care workers who are as young as fifteen years old. (Other states have different licensing requirements. In 1986 the Northern Territory did not require certificated child care workers at all.) The hourly pay scale in 1989 is $7.87 for a certificated child care giver and $3.46 for an untrained worker less than seventeen years old. The fear is that the commercial centers will hire one nurse and two untrained sixteen-year-olds to care for fifteen babies. One director of a private center assured that this would not happen because parents would withdraw their children. However, everyone agrees that, if the cost of day care gets much higher, something will have to give.

The Christopher Robin Day Care Centre in Turner can accomodate 15 babies (4 months - 18 months), 21 toddlers (18 months - 3 years) and 30 pre-schoolers (3 - 5 years). The weekly fees in 1989 were $105.00 for toddlers and pre-schoolers and $115.00 for infants, approximately the same fee schedule for parents as charged by the subsidized centers. The director expressed regret that the government will not subsidize families in private day care centers. She felt that it created an elitist system resulting in many of the

children with special needs being all together in government subsidized centers without the calming influence of more stable children (Hutson, M. personal communication, June 5, 1986).

The center offers a regular pre-school program for the three- to five-year olds. On the morning of the visit, two students from the Canberra College of Advanced Education were just completing a two-week, full-time practicum. They discussed the Centre's emphasis on language development based on the belief that day care children need to develop language facility early so that they can express themselves in constant group situations. The preschool teacher said that the "graduates" of the center usually attend the same primary school and generally are among the most advanced in their class, not because of their exceptional training but because of the amount and consistency of exposure.

In 1988 two new strands were introduced into the preschool program; the Kodaly Music System and a Japanese language program. The first involved a parent fee of $2.50 per lesson but the second was a pilot program funded by the director. The aim was to give the children exposure to another culture and an awareness that English is not the only way to communicate (Hutson, M. personal communication, January 19, 1989).

The quality of the private day care programs in Australia is as uneven as it is in the United States. One professional educator described a center in Melbourne where she found 24 children in a two room 1,000 square-foot house. The center was run by a non-certificated child care worker and two untrained aides (Cahir, P. personal communication, January 17, 1989). At Christopher Robin

the particular aim is to provide stability and good care for children of working parents. The director is an experienced, articulate child educator who is comfortable advising parents on child-rearing problems and stresses the need for family-center cooperation. Most of the children at the center come from well-educated, middle-class families. Many begin when they are four months old and continue until they enter primary school. This combination of a talented director, qualified staff, committed parents and a stable group of children formed the basis for a high-quality private day care program.

For many years the privately-owned centers were not affiliated with the AECA (Australian Early Childhood Association). However, the policy has changed and membership of representatives of commercial organizations is now accepted at the local branch level. In its 1985 Policy Statement the AECA included a Special Policy Interpretation Related to Commercial Policy.

> The Council of AECA accepts as its policy on commercial child care:
>
> 1. Children placed in private centres are entitled to the same rights as children using other services.
> 2. The Association must address itself to the needs of all children and families in Australia (p.22).

In addition it was agreed that the AECA should maintain its leadership role in all aspects of child care services in both the public and private sector.

Playgroups

It is estimated that over 100,000 families are presently

attending playgroups in Australia. Each State has its own Playgroup Association, a minimally-funded organization run primarily by volunteers. For example, in 1986 the Playgroup Association of Western Australia serviced 17,000 children with a committee of 13 volunteers and a part-time staff of two. Traditionally the Playgroup Associations have run a parallel course to the AECA and the child care professionals. At a time when the backyard playgroups in the United States are almost nonexistant, they continue to multiply in Australia. In fact, the government depends on them to be one of the support groups for families with young children.

Playgroup Associations in each State organized independently but in 1981 they combined to form the Playgroup Council of Australia. The functions of the Council are to form a communication link between the State organizations and to provide a united front on government funding and policy issues. The present Commonwealth Government gives some on-going financial support to the Playgroup Associations and the State and Territory Governments provide a little additional help on an annually renewable basis. In 1988 the combined funds for the ACT Playgroup Association was $30,000 As a result playgroups are intertwined with other support groups in a number of interesting ways.

An Adelaide Playgroup. The playgroup experience of a young woman in Adelaide, South Australia, is typical of the majority of parents in the groups. When her daughter was two-and-a-half, Cathy saw a note in a local delicatessen asking for people interested in forming a playgroup. Eventually eight women with children joined together and a location was secured at a local church. The

mothers and children became members of tl Playgroup Association which, for $32.00 per year, also provided in rance. The group met for two hours each Wednesday morning at v ich time they followed the guidelines set up by the Asssociation; th is, a schedule of free play, crafts, juice or fruit and songs and f ger play. The women took turns planning the crafts but each meml r had some official job such as chairman, secretary and trip coordir tor. The group had a cake sale to raise money to get started and lso received from their local government a "Council Grant" of $250). This Council Grant money is available to any worthwhile com unity organization such as Little League, Scouts and playgroups to elp with initial capital expenses.

Both Cathy and her daughter enjoyed th morning at playgroup. They made friends with other women and children in the neighborhood and sometimes exchanged b by sitting or just got together with another family during the wee This is exactly what playgroups are supposed to do. Ideally, the group will continue for years, although the families will change u il there are no longer enough young children in the neighborhood t support its existence.

The Play Bus In October, 1984, a Com onwealth grant from the Community Employment Program (CEP) fund l the Play Bus Scheme which was a collaborative effort between ıe Narrabundah Health Centre, the Narrabundah Neighborhood Centre and the ACT Playgroup Association. Its purpose was tc provide a mobile play service to young families in transit housi ; areas, including two caravan parks in Canberra. The bus wa loaned by the Health Commission, remodeled into a play school ›y the Lions Club and

equipped by the CEP--truly a joint venture. The mothers and children attended once a week but play leaders organized and ran the sessions informally. Mobile units such as this have become popular throughout Australia travelling to isolated areas, new neighborhoods without established services, and in transient, low-income neighborhoods. Unfortunately, in 1986 the Narrabundah grant was not renewed and Play Bus services were sharply curtailed. Individual groups were encouraged to continue on their own although the Neighborhood Centre helped the women locate a permanent venue.

One such group continued in a caravan park on the south side of Canberra. The leaders of the group also attended a Parent-Child-Teacher class at the Neighborhood Centre and tried hard to duplicate the activities. On one morning in May, some of the children were making Mother's Day cards out of folded computer print-out paper, old cut-up cards and homemade paste. Although one woman had brought fresh play dough from home, the mothers usually did not plan the projects in advance of the meeting. The children, aged 16 months to 6 years, played inside and out while the five or six women sat and chatted. At 11:00 cut up fruit was put on plates and the children ate as they played. Aggressive behavior was generally ignored by the mothers. Music and stories were not a regular part of the program. These women were trying to keep the group going , although it was clearly not a "quality program".

In 1988 the Play Bus was refunded under the Family Support Program and began operating five mornings a week in five underpriveleged areas in Canberra, including the South Side Caravan

Park. It employs one certificated child care worker and one assistant, each for 20 hours per week. Although funding is still "shaky", the program is going well (Foster, A. personal communication, January 23, 1989).

The Adoptive Parents Playgroup For a 12-month period during 1985 the ACT Playgroup Association was able to hire a multicultural liaison officer through funds from another CEP scheme. A multcultural playgroup was organized in the suburb of Belconnen and continued long enough to establish the fact that there was a real need for this service. The families included Chilean, Malaysian, Vietnamese and Chinese migrants as well as Australian women with adopted Asian children. When the funds stopped, the group disbanded but one of the women started an adoptive parents playgroup in her back yard. It began as a support group for families with children adopted from other countries but has evolved into a mixed group of adopted and natural children. In this program the organizing parent has taken the responsibility of a "convenor"; she is in charge of the morning's activities but depends on the other mothers to volunteer as needed. The actual schedule is similar to that in Adelaide but the group itself is different. All of the women are older, all of the adopted children are of Asian descent, and many of the discussions are concerned with problems of adopting more children. The ACT Adoptive Parents Association supports the group by publicizing it in their monthly news bulletin.

SPAN Playgroups. The Preschool Correspondence School in Queensland has developed "Span Playgroups". According to their brochure, the term SPAN

refers to the link that is built between families living in isolated areas in their effort to provide some social experiences for themselves and their children. Support is offered to each playgroup through 1) regular contact with a teacher at the Pre-school Correspondence School, 2) occasional visits by an Advisory Pre-School teacher 3) attendance at Parent Workshops (Do You Know Span Playgroups? 1985, p.1).

In order to become a part of the program, at least one family must be enrolled in the regular Pre-School Correspondence School.

Playgroups in Australia are different from those in England in that the mother stays with the child. According to Anne Foster, fathers are beginning to get involved with their children's playgroups; in Canberra, a few fathers are convenors of their group (Foster, A. personal communication, January 23, 1989). Generally families do not continue when the child turns four and enters pre-school. The exception is Western Australia where school entrance is delayed a year. There, four-year-old playgroups have been organized which meet three times per week. The parents often employ a Playleader and mothers are rostered to help but otherwise do not stay with their children. These groups are not encouraged by the Playgroup Association but they receive support and services from the W.A. Department of Education. Generally the Association prefers vertical or "family" grouping but sometimes there are special playgroups for infants. In some locations, such as shopping centers, a permanent venue may be established with one parent acting as contact person for five or six playgroups. In such cases groups may be established according to the ages of the children.

Aboriginal Children's Services

The problems of Aboriginal education are beyond the scope of this paper. Many early childhood professionals expressed their frustration with the injustices of the past and the failures of the present system. Historically, the white population's treatment of the Aboriginal people was early oppression followed by paternalism. The Aborigines were not considered citizens nor allowed to vote until 1967. The present mood of the Aboriginal people seems to be a push for self-determination. This has led to some innovations in early childhood education.

One problem in education has been the lack of qualified Aboriginal teachers. The Deputy Principal of the Aboriginal Studies Program at Milperra College, Sydney, stated that in 1986 there were no more than 50 Aboriginal teachers out of a total number of 60,000 teachers in Australia. Many of the states have recently funded special Aboriginal Education Units at selected colleges. In 1978 South Australia instituted the Aboriginal Early Childhood Programme with the purpose of offering professional training in early childhood to Aboriginal men and women. It involves a three-tiered program; Level 1 provides untrained workers time out from work for intensive tutoring in language and study skills and work in early childhood studies, Level 2 prepares students for a Child Care Certificate, and Level 3 leads to a regular Diploma of Teaching in Early Childhood Education (Palmer, 1984).

A Perth Pre-PrePrimary Class. In Western Australia a Basic Child Care Course (BCCC) was especially designed for Aboriginal women. This twelve-month course is not enough for a Child Care

Certificate but does qualify the graduates as trained aides. The students enrolled in the program get on-the-job training working in child care centers. For example, a pre-preprimary class for Aboriginal three and four year old children in Perth, W. A. meets two times a week in a church facility in Belmont. It is supported by the W. A. Department of Aboriginal Affairs and has the dual responsibility of educating children and training aides. The staff consists of one preschool teacher and two Aboriginal aides, one of whom planned to continue her education to become a certificated child care worker. Many of the school's goals are similar to Head Start's: emphasis on cultural identity and basic skills, free door-to-door bus service and an attempt to involve parents. The families are Urban Aborigines, most of whom have forgotten their native language but maintain strong ties with relatives still in bush settlements. The classes try to prepare the children for regular school and, according to the staff, they are succeeding. All of the women at the center in 1986 resented the fact that many white teachers have low expectations for all Aborigines. They felt that finally teachers are demanding--and getting--good performances from these students.

Murawina. Murawina, an Aboriginal word meaning "Black Woman" is an early childhood and parent program in the Mt. Druitt area of Sydney. The center, a remodeled house in a government subsidized housing area, was licensed for 28 children in 1986. At that time it employed a director, one pre-school teacher and six Aboriginal aides. The director was an outspoken advocate of Aboriginal rights who spoke freely to the group of visitors. She felt

that one needed to be involved in the whole Aboriginal problem in order to be effective in any one area such as Early Childhood. For example, she talked of "forced integration" which referred to the New South Wales Government's policy of placing Aboriginal families in government subsidized housing on a deliberately random basis. The families, isolated from their own support groups and ignored by their neighbors, looked to Murawina for help.

Murawina is an attempt by the Aboriginal community to help their children succeed in the Australian white culture. Their goals are to provide children with positive self-esteem and pride in their heritage as well as to teach basic skills for success in kindergarten. Except for the one white pre-school teacher, all of the aides were Aboriginal men or women. However, since none of them had the State-recognized credentials for day care workers, the center did not receive the Commonwealth subsidies of $12.20 and $18.20 per child, although it was 100% funded from other sources. The aides all attended in-service classes and were given "on-the-job training" with special attention being made to include Aboriginal customs in the program. The Centre did not have enough money to follow the children's progress beyond the first year of public schooling. The children seemed to be doing well and the director expressed her frustration with the government which refused to look at the success of the Aboriginal-run center and continued to support a white-determined education for Aboriginal children (Stewart, P. personal communication, June 26, 1986).

As the Aborigines become more educated, they are beginning to demand their rights as an indigenous people. Many Australians have

had to re-examine their own consciences and have realized, somewhat painfully, that the problems won't just disappear. The pre-school children at centers such as Murawina may be the Aboriginal leaders of their generation.

Conclusions

When asked what the biggest problems were facing parents with young children in Australia today, parents or early childhood professionals invariably put "the isolation of the mother" at the head of the list. A mother in Adelaide described it as "living in the suburbs", a young woman from Brisbane called it "being stuck with the kids all day with no car". The facts are that over two-thirds of Australian women with young children are at home full time, nursery schools are expensive or non-existent and occasional-care centers may be too far away to be practical. The positive side of this is that the government recognizes the problem and subsidizes a wide variety of support services.

The second most common area of concern was the low self-esteem of some of the at-home mothers when the value of staying home is being questioned. The traditional view that it is a mother's job to care for the children and the father's to provide for them is wide-spread in Australia. As recently as 1981 even the professionals themselves had not agreed on the role of day care in children's lives. At that time, Sebastian wrote: "They (professional groups) have been unable to determine who should be responsible for its (day care) development and whether it should be primarily custodial in function or educational/developmental" (1981, p.38). Suddenly working mothers and early childhood services have

become a popular political issue. However, since very little part-time work is available, the actual options for young mothers may be of the "no-win" variety. She can stay at home or she can work full-time, making private arrangements for her children or leaving them in family day care or at a center where the caregivers themselves may subconciously disapprove of a mother's leaving her children (Kelley, 1986). As Australian society adjusts to the fact that women will continue to work, the choices for mothers with young children should improve.

Recently the AECA has taken an active role as advisors to the Labour Government on early childhood policies. The Australian Journal of Early Childhood, the Association's long history in the early kindergarten movement and administration of the Lady Gowrie Centres have given it credence as a stable, knowledgable organization. The present director of the AECA is preparing a position paper for the Labour Government outlining a plan for child care into the 21st century.

In June, 1988 the Australian Labour Party (ALP) made a major commitment to child care. It promised to

- Continue to expand children's services and allocate resources through a planning model based on needs.
- Further develop agreements with State and Territory administrations on an overall planned distribution of capital and recurrent contributions, including those made by community groups, employers, and local govenment authorities.
- Provide adequate subsidies and fee relief assistance to

approved non-profit services which will guarantee quality care, the employment of appropriately trained and experienced staff, and which will allow services to be provided at a cost which can be met by the majority of users.

- Support work-related childcare as a right of working parents, and encourage its provision in both the public and private sectors (ALP, 1988, pp127-128).

It is hoped that the improving economy will permit adequate funding.

The quality and diversity of child care services in Australia is impressive. Although government funded preschool education is not yet available to all eligible children, both the Labour and Liberal parties are committed to that concept. One cannot help but admire the Australian policy of establishing neighborhood centers and day care centers which service children from a broad economic base and then charge by the family's ability to pay. The Australian Government's ability to require that all government subsidized, non-profit organizations must have parent and/or community management boards is well established. Australians volunteer for community service as a matter or course.

But further development of early childhood services in Australia during the next few years will be greatly determined by the economic climate. The AECA is in a strong political position, women are demanding services and the framework for growth is well established. The question is to what extent the country is willing and able to support it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

"America's children are vulnerable because our nation has failed to come to grips with today's realities for families." (Children's Defense Fund. 1989, p. 175).

Although the problems surrounding this crisis in child care cannot be solved by imitating the successes of other countries, there is much to be learned by studying what others have done, how the programs were set up and funded, and how well they are working. We know that no single program will meet the needs of every family, or even one family over a period of time. Parents may prefer family day care when the child is an infant, but they may switch to center based care for the preschool years, and then to an after school program for school age care.

However, parents are free to choose only if options are available to them. In a 1985 Gallup survey of 1,234 California households with children under the age of 14 which was conducted for the Governor's Child Care Task Force, parents were asked about their child care arrangements. About half of the families reported availability of both family day care and center based care as one problem. Cost, scheduling, and location were mentioned by others (Grubb, 1989). This is the situation in California which "has the best-developed policy toward child care and early childhood programs of any state in the nation" (Grubb, 1989, p. 65). On the national level, "Because of the dearth of

affordable child care, too many parents today use a patchwork of child care resources and are forced to compromise on quality to find any child care at all" (Children's Defense Fund, 1988, p.180).

These three issues, the affordability, availability and quality of early childhood programs, are international concerns. The focus of this chapter is on these issues.

Affordability

All children need safe, healthy, developmentally sound child care. In the United States, the use of child care, not including half day nursery schools, is almost entirely a function of working parents. In 1986, approximately 1.3 million California children under the age of five used some sort of day care, ranging from unpaid care with relatives to formal, center-based care (Grubb, 1989). But formal day care is expensive. In 1985, the average yearly cost of one child in preschool day care in the United States was $3,000. This is 32% of full time poverty-level wages for a family of three and 16% of the median earnings for a couple aged 18 to 24. One common rule-of-thumb is that 10% of income of middle class families and 5% of income of poor families can be spent on child care (Children's Defense Fund, 1988 and Grubb, 1989). According to Joyce Sebian (1986), Coordinator of Massachusetts Day Care Services, infant care in the greater Boston area costs between $5,300 and $9,250 per year--amounts clearly beyond the reach of even middle class families.

In this study, Denmark offers the most comprehensive child care program, from maternity leave benefits through school age care. The combination of state and local support accounts for 65%

to 75% of the total cost of child care for all families, with a sliding fee schedule for low income families. Brønby, a working class suburb of Copenhagen, spends 10% of its total annual budget on programs for preschool and after school care. In the Italian city of Reggio nell'Emilia, the comprehensive, high quality child care programs account for 12% of its budget. These are statistics which Americans should know when planning programs for the future.

In England, the Playgroup Movement has been providing low cost, part-time nursery education for over 40 years. Its success depends upon a strong volunteer organization plus some government recognition and support, at roughly one fourth the cost of a regular half day nursery school (Bruner, 1980). Since mothers participate on an occasional basis, or not at all, playgroups can accommodate some part-time working women. The Runnymeade Playgroup in London is an example of an extended day playgroup. This group was "run in an ill-lit church hall on the edge of a redevelopment site, but the unprepossessing premises housed a particularly friendly, relaxed nursery" (Bruner, 1980, p.141). The trained staff and rota mothers ran the operation on a shoe string, but Bruner was impressed with the fun and enjoyment exhibited by both adults and children. He encouraged the development of other models based on the volunteer, rota-concept of playgroups which could be expanded into full day care. With Britain's well developed flexible work schedules for employees, many parents can benefit from spending half a day at their children's playgroups in order to get four and a half additional days of affordable, quality child care (1980). This

is a concept which deserves consideration in the United States. For example, in 37% of California families at least one parent works only part time, opening the possibility of cooperative care arrangements (Grubb, 1989).

Almost every teacher and administrator interviewed for this study expressed a need for more money. During the 1980s, Danish, English, Spanish, Italian, and Australian governments have all experienced fiscal belt-tightening, with the result that they share the dilemma of who on the educational ladder should get the limited funds available for program expansion. However, except for the British government, which "has shown a solid lack of response to the stresses and demands of urban life, particularly among young families with children under school age" (Bruner, 1980, p.4), each of the political parties currently in power has a publicly supported child care policy. In the United States:

> The child care crisis can only be met through an active partnership of the federal government, state and local governments, and the private sector. Despite the tremendous growth in demand for decent and affordable child care, however, the federal leadership required to address the problem in any systematic or substantial way has been nonexistant (Children's Defense Fund, 1988, p. 182).

A coherent government policy is a prerequisite for affordable child care.

Availability

In the United States, hard data on the supply versus demand issue of day care is not available. The PACE study of California children states that

> it is necessary to discover (1) whether programs meet the demand for child care, and (2) if not, what happens to children in families that do not receive help. Do they wind up in poor care? Must their parents forego work in order to care for them? If so, is this better or worse for the children? By what standard should we measure "better" or "worse"?
>
> The most troublesome paradox facing child care in the state, then, is that *California provides more funding for a greater variety of child care programs than any other state; yet public subsidies are widely viewed as inadequate* (Grubb, 1989, p.85).

The Children's Defense Fund cites specific shortages in day care across the nation and extrapolates that "Due to the leadership vacuum in addressing the child care challenge, the unmet needs of children and families escalate across the nation" (Children's Defense Fund, 1988, p. 186). Ellen Galinsky estimates that "as many as one out of every four workers is currently dealing with child care worries" (1988, p.2). Day care problems affect working parents on the job in a number of different ways: absenteeism, tardiness, child related stress, and inability to concentrate at work (Galinsky, 1988).

In the five countries that I studied, only Denmark does not have an availability problem. Because of the falling birthrate in Denmark, Brønby anticipates unfilled openings in its day care centers through 1989 (Budget, 1986). Both England and Spain offer comparatively little in publicly supported educational programs or day care for young children. However, while the English attempt to meet the problem with low cost playgroups and part-time care, the Catalunyans tend to increase class size and the teacher-child ratio to keep costs down and availability up.

The Italian government has made a conscious decision to put state money for day care centers into the poorer regions of the country and rely on the wealthy, industrial areas in the north to support their own programs on the municipal level. The Commonwealth government in Australia is leaning to allocating block education grants to states which then must decide how the money should be spent. The trend in the United States appears to be in a combination of Federal, state, local and private efforts, including more employer involvement.

Quality

Quality is a difficult component to measure. However, the National Day Care Study has identified several factors which seem to have a direct effect on the quality of a program. They are: (1) The reduced adult-child ratio of 1 to 10 is recommended as an outer limit for 3 to 4 year olds. (2) Small group size is preferable to larger groups because distractions and interruptions are fewer. (3) Better trained teachers generally have higher quality programs. (4) Low salaries mean a high turnover and a less

educated workforce. Other aspects of quality care include the structuring of the physical plant and the program, and the general ambience of the center (Grubb, 1989).

In the United States, the federal government no longer sets minimum standards for child care programs. Standards for both programs receiving federal funds and private centers are now set by individual states and vary widely throughout the country. California licensing requirements for the private sector, both center-based care and family day care, are based on setting minimum health and safety standards which include adult-child ratios and a minimum of 12 units in child development for teachers in a center (Grubb, 1989). California is one of the 42 states which require no training for family day care providers (Children's Defense Fund, 1988). The only requirements for a teacher's aide are a tuberculosis clearance and a finger print check against possible child abuse violations.

The ingredients for quality early childhood programs are universal, and salary considerations are at the top of everone's list. The relatively high salaries paid to Danish teachers result in low turnover of personnel. The Miscellaneous Workers' Union in Australia is seeking to organize the child care workers in the ACT in order to clarify job classification and increase wages and benefits. In Spain and England, teachers in elementary and secondary schools are involved in negotiations for higher wages and one can expect preschood teachers to follow suit. In 1988, the Italian government raised the salaries of all teachers in state supported early childhood programs and, at the same time,

required 40 hours of in-service training per year per teacher. In each country, educators were re-evaluating the teacher training programs.

Where the adult-child ratio is high, as in Italy and Spain, the use of work books and structured learning seems to be common. When groups are small, as in Denmark, it is easy for the teachers to provide stimulating activities such as cooking, gardening, or walks in the woods, but where groups are large, as in Rome, the teachers did not dare to cross the street to the park.

Family day care is under scrutiny in the United States as a result of recent tragic accidents and near-accidents. In this country, licensed family day care providers must satisfy minimum health and safety requirements. For example, in California, the law states that licensed homes are subject to spot inspections by either the state or the county and must by inspected at least once every three years (L.A. Times, 1989, April 11). In Orange County,California, eight Social Services caseworkers each monitor more that 300 family day care homes; in Riverside County, the ratio if 400 to 1 (L.A. Times, 1989, April 11). This can't be compared to the ACT (Australia), where family day care is divided into schemes, each of which supervises about 200 children with an average of three children per carer. Each scheme employs a coordinator and enough fieldworkers and support staff to average about one hour per week of social services time per child in the scheme. Fieldworkers try to visit each active carer once a fortnight and actually see each child at least once a month. "Field workers attempt to do many things during home visits. The main

reason...is to ensure that safe care is being offered. Safety regulations can be constantly monitored, and the type of play experiences...can also be noted" (Gifford, pp.17-18). In Australia, the government takes an active role in assuring quality care in private homes. In the United States, the proposed Act for Better Child Care now before Congress would assist states by providing funds to train new and continuing family day care providers and to hire additional staff to monitor child care programs (Children's Defense Budget, 1988). This Act, which will help to provide the safe environment for American children that Australian children al ready have, is still just a proposal, not a law.

The Future

Many parents, teachers, and administrators in Denmark, England, Spain, Italy, and Australia expressed concerns about the future of programs for young children in their countries. But these national problems are often multi-national and cross-cultural and are American concerns as well. Some of the questions that I heard asked were reflected in political issues, others were educational and some had philosophical implications.

The political questions that I heard most frequently were:.

- What direction will future funding take? Will the voucher system replace publicly supported child care centers?
- As money gets tighter, authorities relax regulations concerning group size, and adult-child ratios get larger. What will the future bring?

• How can we get across to people the idea that child care is not just an economic issue but that it is a family issue that also concerns the nation and the state?

The educational type questions were:

• How can we give child care professionals the emotional and intellectual support that they deserve?

• When will day care providers get paid a living wage?

Questions of a more philosophical nature heard over and over again were:

• Child care is being described as "spaces, or slots, needed". The emphasis is on the woman's need to work rather than on the developmental needs of the child. What about the child's needs?

• What is the long term effect on a child of full day care from infancy to adolescence?

These are questions that need to be answered all over the world. If a nation's future rests on the children of today, then the planning for the future begins today with care of its children.

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Appendix A

Pre-School Provision in England and Wales

Pre-fives are being cared for in a variety of institutions ranging from registered child minders on the one hand to reception classes in large first schools; some of the provision is clearly not educational. The following types of provision exist; they have different aims and different views on parent participaiton, having as they do a different history and a different function.

Nursery schools - Staffed by a head teacher, nursery teachers and nursery nurses

Nursery units - Attached to primary schools with a teacher in charge, nursery teachers and nursery nurses.

Nursery classes - Attached to primary schools with nursery teachers and nursery nurse

) Provided free by the LEA for 3 & 4 year olds, not statutory therefore very varied provision between LEAs

(209,861 children)

All these meet stringent DES requirements concerning adult : child ratio (1:13); play space (indoor and outdoor); provision of toilets, washing facilities, etc.
They may be part-time 9:00 - 11:45 and 1:00 to 3:30 or full-time school hours. Normal school terms and holidays apply.

Day nurseries Provided by the local authority social services department for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years. Not enough places for those who require day care. Fees are paid according to means of parents applying (often working parents). Children are also recommended by health visitors and social workers and fees may be paid by social services. Staffed by nursery nurses and a nursery matron. Day nurseries meet DHSS requirements concerning adult : child ratio (1 : 5), play space, safety and hygiene.

They open form 8:00 - 5:30 (sometimes later) every day except Bank Holidays, provide meals, are often organised in family groups. (2 : 11)

(29,022 children)

Combined centres — Provided by LEA, meet DES and DHSS requirements for children 6 weeks to 5 years staffed by nursery teachers and matrons and nursery nurses working on shift basis. Different organisation in different centres but levels of co-operation between staff vary and anomalies in admissions, cost, equipment, staff pay annd conditions are sometimes accentuated.

Reception classes — The first class in primary shcools provided free by LEA for 4 - 5 year olds ("rising fives"). 92% attend a full day session. Staffed by a qualified teacher (often infant trained) plus on average 1 nursery nurse to 66 children (e.g., 1 : 19 in nursery classes).

(268,720 children)

Playgroups — Provided by parent committees or SSDs as members of the Pre-school Playgroups Association for children aged 2 and 1/2 years to 5 years. Fees charged each session, usually of 2 - 3 hours, and children often attend 2 or 3 sessions per week. Staffed by at least one trained supervisor (ex-teacher, SRN, NNEB or one-year play-group course) who are usually poorly paid (plus parent helpers on rota). Average size 24 per group usually meeting in private homes, church halls or parish rooms. Minimum standards laid down by DHSS but these are less stringent than DES and vary enormously. Recommended ratio 1 : 8 for 3 year olds, 1 : 6 for under threes. Playgroups are 'inspected' by area play-group organisers and many are supported by LEAs who do not themselves provide sufficient nursery education in the area.

(approx. 590,650 children)

Child minders — Care provided by individual minders registered with local SSD which inspects premises and imposes requirements. In 1977 the average cost to parents per child per week was £10. 75% of places are for full day care, with a ratio of 1 : 2.2 children; the remainder often function like playgroups with a ratio of 1 : 6 children. No training is necessary and pay is low.

(estimated 97,000) children

Work place nurseries, creches and private nurseries probably provide another 25,000 places. They must meet SSD requirements but vary in facilities offered, staffing and fees charged.

Percentage of children under five attending different types of nursery provision: England and Wales 1977 (as quoted in "Nurseries Now", Hughes et as, Penguin. 1980).

8.3%	Council day nurseries	)	
6.7%	Nursery schools/classes	)	state sector 16%
1.0%	Reception classes	)	
18.5%	Playgroups	)	
.8%	Work place nurseries	)	Voluntary/private 22%
3.0%	Reg. child minders	)	

62% Not attending any type of pre-school provision.

(Information from the Department of Health and Social Services, 1977)

Appendix B

Australia

Australia: Estimated size and population, March, 1989.

State or territory	Estimate area (km^2)	Estimated population
New South Wales	801,600	5,715,900
Victoria	227,600	4,274,300
Queensland	1,727,200	2,761,500
South Australia	984,000	1,411,500
Western Australia	2,525,500	1,556,000
Tasmania	67,800	448,700
Northern Territory	1,346,200	156,000
Australian Capital Territory	12,400	274.000
Total	7,692,300	16,597,900

Monthly Summary of Statistics, 1989, March)